

Weekly Compilation of
**Presidential
Documents**



Monday, April 5, 2004
Volume 40—Number 14
Pages 489–529

Contents

Addresses and Remarks

See also Bill Signings; Meetings With Foreign Leaders
Arizona, discussion on homeownership in Phoenix—489
Baseball Hall of Fame members, remarks honoring—508
Bush-Cheney dinner—509
National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, announcing National Security Adviser Rice's public testimony—507
National Republican Congressional Committee dinner—515
NATO, ceremony honoring seven nations on accession—495
Radio address—494
West Virginia, discussion on job training in Huntington—520
Wisconsin
First-responders in Appleton—506
National economy in Appleton—497

Bill Signings

Unborn Victims of Violence Act of 2004, remarks—514

Meetings With Foreign Leaders

Albania, Prime Minister Nano—495
Bulgaria
Defense Minister Svinarov—495
Foreign Minister Pasi—495
Prime Minister Saxe-Coburg-Gotha—495
Croatia, Prime Minister Sanader—495

Meetings With Foreign Leaders—Continued

Estonia
Defense Minister Hanson—495
Foreign Minister Ojula—495
Prime Minister Parts—495
Latvia
Defense Minister Slakteris—495
Foreign Minister Piki—495
Prime Minister Emsis—495
Lithuania
Defense Minister Linkevicius—495
Foreign Minister Valionis—495
Prime Minister Brazauskas—495
Macedonia, Prime Minister Crvenkovski—495
NATO, Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer—495
Romania
Defense Minister Pascu—495
Foreign Minister Geoana—495
Prime Minister Nastase—495
Slovakia
Defense Minister Liska—495
Foreign Minister Kukan—495
Prime Minister Dzurinda—495
Slovenia
Defense Minister Grizold—495
Foreign Minister Rupel—495
Prime Minister Rop—495

Supplementary Materials

Acts approved by the President—529
Checklist of White House press releases—529
Digest of other White House announcements—527
Nominations submitted to the Senate—528

Editor's Note: The President was in Greensboro, GA, on April 2, the closing date of this issue. Releases and announcements issued by the Office of the Press Secretary but not received in time for inclusion in this issue will be printed next week.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

Published every Monday by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC 20408, the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* contains statements, messages, and other Presidential materials released by the White House during the preceding week.

The *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* is published pursuant to the authority contained in the Federal Register Act (49 Stat. 500, as amended; 44 U.S.C. Ch. 15), under regulations prescribed by the Administrative Committee of the Federal Register, approved by the President (37 FR 23607; 1 CFR Part 10).

Distribution is made only by the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. The *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* will be furnished by mail to domestic subscribers for \$80.00 per year (\$137.00 for mailing first class) and to foreign subscribers for \$93.75 per year, payable to the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. The charge for a single copy is \$3.00 (\$3.75 for foreign mailing).

The *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* is also available on the Internet on the GPO Access service at <http://www.gpo.gov/nara/nara003.html>.

There are no restrictions on the republication of material appearing in the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*.

US GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
SUPERINTENDENT OF DOCUMENTS
Washington DC 20402

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
Penalty for private use, \$300

PRESORTED STANDARD
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
GPO
PERMIT NO. G-26

Week Ending Friday, April 2, 2004

**Remarks in a Discussion on
Homeownership in Phoenix, Arizona**
March 26, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks a lot. Thank you all very much. I appreciate Doug McCarron's leadership in terms of making sure people have the skills necessary to work in the jobs of the 21st century. Actually, you look like you're dressed the way a president should be—[laughter]—and I'm dressed like a carpenter—[laughter]—which isn't all that bad a deal.

I want to thank you for having me here. I appreciate Mike McCarron for opening up this facility. Thank you, Mike, for inviting us. He invited us here so we can have a discussion on job training skills and homeownership.

Before we have the discussion, I do want to say a couple of things. First, I want to recognize some people in the audience. Two great United States Senators, John McCain and John Kyl, are with us. I don't know if you know this, Doug, but John McCain was telling me on the way over from the airport that he was here when they opened this facility. He told me—he said, "You're going to find a magnificent training facility." He forgot to tell me how magnificent it is. This is quite a place—quite a place. I know you're proud of it.

I appreciate Members of the Congress who are here, J.D. Hayworth, John Shadegg, Jeff Flake, Trent Franks. Thank you all for coming.

It's such an impressive place, they even brought old Ron Lewis from Kentucky, who's a Member of the House, with us. Ron, thank you for being here, glad you came. There he is.

Mr. Mayor, Phil Gordon, is with us. Thanks for coming, Mr. Mayor. I appreciate you being here.

I want to thank members of the Carpenters Union who have opened up this

beautiful facility to us. Thank you for working hard. Thank you for being responsible citizens who love your family and love your country. Most of all, I'm honored to be in your presence. Thanks for building the stage. [Laughter]

Today when I landed, I met a lady named Barbara Lockwood. Barbara, where are you? There she is. Thanks for coming, Barbara. Barbara is a volunteer of Keep Phoenix Beautiful. The reason I bring that up is, communities are really strong when people are willing to volunteer, willing to take time out of their lives to improve the community in which you live. There's all kinds of ways to do so. Keep Phoenix Beautiful is one such idea. Mentoring a child is an idea. Loving a neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself is an idea on how to make sure your community is good. I know that many of your members work hard on the day job and volunteer to help somebody's life. See, America can change for the better, one heart and one soul at a time.Q03

And the reason I want to bring up Barbara is that she sets such a good example by taking time out of her life to make Phoenix, Arizona, a better place. Barbara, thank you for your service, and thank you for the example you have set for others.

The housing industry is booming, which means more people own their home, and that's positive. It means more carpenters are working, and that's positive. It's an amazing statement to say that, given what this country has been through. We've been through a recession. We've been through an attack on America, and that attack on America affected us. We lost jobs after the attack on America. It also changed our way of thinking about how we look at the world. We used to think oceans could protect us, where we could kind of sit back and see threats gather and could deal with them if we felt like it or ignore

them if we wanted to, because oceans protected us. But that changed on September the 11th.

We're doing everything we can to secure the homeland. I want to thank those who are involved with the first-responders or our police and firefighters for working hard to be ready. But the best way to protect America's homeland is to stay on the offense and bring these people to justice before they hurt us again. *[Applause]* Thank you.

The Nation is strong. We refuse to be intimidated by these killers. And we started to recover, and then we found out that some corporate citizens forgot what it meant to be responsible citizens. You know who I'm talking about, the people who didn't tell the truth to their shareholders and their employees. We passed tough new laws. I want to thank the Members of the Senate who are here and the members of the congressional delegation for joining together to pass tough laws that sends this message: We're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America. That dishonesty affected us. It was another hurdle we had to cross. It kind of shook the confidence of the people.

And then we had another hurdle we had to cross. As I told you, September the 11th changed how we should view the world. We must deal with threats before they fully materialize. When we see a threat, we've got to deal with it. I looked at the intelligence in Iraq, and I saw a threat. The Congress looked at the same intelligence, and it saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the same intelligence, and it saw a threat as well. We said to Saddam Hussein, "Everybody thinks you're a threat, so you disarm." We gave him yet another choice. It was his choice to make. We said, "Disarm, for the sake of freedom and peace," and he defied the world again.

And therefore, I had a choice to make: Do I trust the word of somebody who had used weapons of mass destruction on his own people? Do I trust the word of a madman? Or do I take actions necessary to defend America? Given that choice, every time, I will defend this country. *[Applause]* Thank you all.

When you're marching to war to defend the country, it sends a negative signal. If you're a homebuyer, it doesn't instill a lot

of confidence in the future if you think your country is going to war. If you're somebody trying to build homes, marching to war is a negative thought, not a positive thought. Now we're marching to peace. The world is more peaceful.

But these are hurdles we have overcome as a country. Think about these statistics: We're the fastest growing major industrialized nation in the world; the unemployment rate right here in Arizona has gone from 5.9 percent last year to 5.2 percent this year; inflation is low; interest rates are low; manufacturing activity is up. No, this economy has gone through a lot. And you know why? Because the American workers and the American people and the American entrepreneurs are strong, steady, and resolute.

I'm going to tell you another statistic, which is an amazing statistic given what we've been through: Housing starts in 2003 were the highest in a quarter of a century. Homeownership sales were the highest ever. Sixty-eight percent of homeownership—the homeownership rate is the highest ever, and that's fantastic news for America.

We want more people owning their own home. There's nothing like saying, "This home is my home." There's nothing better than somebody over there saying, "Welcome to my home." And we're about to talk to some first-time homeowners. And I want to share their stories with you. They're going to share their stories with me, and you're going to get to hear it.

I do want to talk about a challenge for our country, and there is a minority homeownership gap in America. Not enough minorities own their own homes. And it seems like to me, it makes sense to encourage all to own homes. And so we've done some interesting things. Again, I want to thank the Congress, but we passed downpayment assistance programs that will help low-income folks buy their own home. A lot of times, if you're trying to buy your own home, you never bought one, the downpayment seems like a little much. Some of you know what I'm talking about. It seems to make sense if one of the things we're trying to do is to get—to close the minority homeownership gap and to get 5.5 new—million new minority homeowners into homes over the next 5 years, that we

ought to help with downpayments, and we have.

The State of Arizona is going to have \$2.6 million to help people with downpayments. I proposed that mortgages that have FHA-backed insurance pay no downpayment. That will help 150,000 new homeowners.

What we're trying to do is make it easier for somebody to own a home, and there's practical ways the Government can help. We've got what's called HUD Section 8 programs that are generally rent programs. We've converted those rent programs to self-sufficiency programs, where people are helped to be able to set aside money for downpayments. We're about to hear somebody who has benefited from such program.

We've got HUD's home program that provides grants to States to help counseling. That's really important. Have you ever seen some of the contracts? There's a lot of fine print. And if you've never bought a home before, it kind of makes you nervous to sign off on something with a lot of fine print. There are counselors all over the State of Arizona who are willing to help people understand what it means to sign a contract, to understand what it means when they're buying their first home, what it means to be a homeowner, what the obligations are.

I want to thank the counselors who are here. I want to thank the people who are here who work with first-time homebuyers. We need to make sure that there's affordable houses around the country. That's why I proposed a \$2.5-billion tax credit for rehabilitation of inner-city homes and for the building of affordable homes for low-income citizens. We want homes. We want people owning their own home. Ownership is an important part of the American experience.

One other thing I've done is I've called on private sector mortgage banks and banks to be more aggressive about lending money to first-time homebuyers. And the response has been really good. There's a lot of people in this—our communities around the country that deeply care about the issue of homeownership, and they've been responsive.

Senators Kyl and McCain told me about a fellow named Jerry Bisgrove here in Arizona. He's not a part of a mortgage banking deal. He's just a decent citizen. But like the

mortgage bankers who have helped new time—first-time homeowners, Bisgrove is a successful businessman, evidently, has turned back and said, "I want to help people with affordable housing." It's that kind of effort—effort at the Federal level, effort at the charitable level—that's going to make a big difference in closing the minority homeownership gap, and when we do, America will be a better place.

The thing I like about Doug is he understands that when you give somebody additional skills, it will improve their lifestyle. You see, when a worker becomes more productive, that worker is going to make more money. And we're about to hear a story that verifies that point—Jorge. Anyway—not yet. [Laughter] *Casi*.

But Doug is an innovative leader. And as he mentioned to you, I've had the honor of going to some of his training facilities around the country, and they're impressive. They're impressive because they're so humane, and they take a person who wants to work, give him a little additional help, and they become well-paid, more able to do their duty as a mom or a dad. So, Doug, thanks. I appreciate you having me.

[Douglas J. McCarron, general president, United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, made brief remarks, concluding as follows.]

Mr. McCarron. Mr. President, the men and women that I represent have shown that they are willing to work hard. They are willing to train hard. And they are willing to compete. Now, I know, Mr. President, over the next few months, you'll hear from advisers and pundits, but speaking for the Carpenters Union, let me tell you, the most important issue for us is jobs.

The President. Doug, let me say something. Yes. The most important issue for me is jobs.

[Mr. McCarron made further remarks.]

The President. One of the things I forgot to mention to Doug and to congratulate Doug and the union on was the work at the World Trade Center after September the 11th. A lot of his members went to help clear the rubble. And they went in there, and they

worked long, long hours, and there was not one accident. They did an unbelievable job, and I want to thank you and thank the membership——

Mr. McCarron. That's good union labor, Mr. President.

The President. Good job. All right. Jorge Sotelo. Jorge is a family man, hard-working guy. Jorge, tell us about yourself.

[Jorge Sotelo, foreman, DPR Construction, Avondale, AZ, made brief remarks.]

The President. So in other words, let me make sure I understand. Before you came here, what were you doing?

Mr. Sotelo. I was doing the same thing. You know, I was in construction but at less wages. You know, I didn't——

The President. You were just out there working hard and less wages. And how did you hear about this facility?

Mr. Sotelo. They went to the place where we were working before, and they told us about the union. And you say, "Yes, it's time for a change. I want to learn something. I want to—better skills for myself and get a better life for my family."

The President. And so, let me ask you something, Jorge. Were you working during the day and coming here at school at night?

Mr. Sotelo. Yes. After work.

The President. And how long did it take for you to get the skills necessary to get another certification?

Mr. Sotelo. It depends how many hours—we got the program for 18 hours, 20 hours. It's just how many hours you can give me here.

The President. Somebody told me, like this—you bought a home this year.

Mr. Sotelo. Yes.

The President. First home?

Mr. Sotelo. Actually, it was the second home, but it's a better home now.

The President. Better home?

Mr. Sotelo. Yes.

The President. So you upgraded?

Mr. Sotelo. Yes, definitely.

The President. The lesson is, is that you can improve your quality of life if you work hard, one, and two, you're willing to go back to school.

I remember coming to Mesa Community College a while ago. Doug, I think you'll find this interesting. It's the same exact principle that you employ here. And I met a woman who had worked for—as a graphic design artist for 15 years, went back to a Mesa Community College technical training program, graduated, and got out. And in her first year, she made more money than she did after her 15th year as a graphic design artist. She gained skills. She upgraded her ability to be a productive worker, and she improved her quality of life dramatically.

And that's exactly what Jorge did. And that's one of the reasons why we're heralding programs like this. If people are looking for work, you can find work in Phoenix, Arizona. And if you're really interested in improving yourself, you can do so by going to programs such as the one Doug sponsors here or at the one at Mesa Community College.

Now, Emily is with us. Are you ready?

Emily McElhaney. Yes, sir.

The President. Emily McElhaney. How many homes have you owned in your life?

Ms. McElhaney. This is the first one.

The President. Would you mind telling us your story?

[Ms. McElhaney, first-time homebuyer, Mesa, AZ, made brief remarks.]

The President. See, this is a story that's repeated all throughout the country. It's a family of five, and they wanted their own home. They want a place to say, "This is my home," a place where they raise their kids, in their own home. And you had trouble with the downpayment—like, you kind of looked at it, "It might be a little too high for us."

So what happened? You went to a HUD home program?

Ms. McElhaney. The Housing for Mesa was able to set us up with a realtor and a lender, and they gave us downpayment assistance to help us through that. And then they walked us through every step of the program and explained all those contracts that we had to sign that you were mentioning earlier.

The President. Slightly intimidating, aren't they?

Ms. McElhaney. Exactly, yes.

The President. It's what we call "the fine print." [Laughter]

Ms. McElhaney. That's right.

The President. And they explained it all to you?

Ms. McElhaney. We had a counselor that was assigned specifically to us. And she, even before we went to the title agency to sign all the papers, she went over each of them with us, because you can't read all of those in that short amount of time, and so we knew what we were signing when we got there.

The President. See, that's a very important part of being a homeowner, is you've got to help people understand what they're doing. I mean, it's an intimidating process. For some, it might seem like a natural process. But here's Emily. She was slightly intimidated by the size of the contract, and a good soul stepped up as a result of probably—I know Federal money helped, probably State money as well—and provided a counseling service. Had the counseling service not been there, in all likelihood—I'm not predicting what you would have done, but I suspect you might not have done it.

Ms. McElhaney. That's correct. We wouldn't have.

The President. Is the counselor here? No.

Ms. McElhaney. Yes, she is.

The President. She is here? Where?

Ms. McElhaney. Edna McLaughlin is right here.

The President. Well, thank you. Thank you. Thank you for doing that. It must make you feel pretty good to know you've helped this family realize their dreams.

Edna McLaughlin. Very good.

The President. Yes. She said, "Very good." [Laughter]

Monica Mims is with us. Hi, Monica.

Monica Mims. Hi.

The President. Hi. Do you own a home?

Ms. Mims. Yes, I do.

The President. How many have you had?

Ms. Mims. This is my first home.

The President. Tell us about yourself.

[Ms. Mims, first-time homebuyer, Mesa, AZ, made brief remarks.]

The President. The Section 8 housing program was a rental program, and it was important to help people rent. But remember, we want people owning. That's what we want. The more people that own their home,

the more carpenters are going to be working. But more importantly, the more people that own their home, the more satisfaction there will be in America, in the American experience.

And so they took the Section 8 program, and what she just told you was they helped her, through Section 8 money, get the credit necessary and the planning necessary and the ability to buy her own place. Section 8 helped with the downpayment a little bit too, didn't it?

Ms. Mims. Yes, they did. What they do is every time you pay your rent, they set a little money aside for you in an account. And that helped me with my downpayment. My downpayment was 3 percent. So as long as you also show that you can save your money, you want to show that you can establish your credit, but you can also show that you can save some money also. So my downpayment, it wasn't that bad, but I was kind of nervous about it.

The President. Yes. The fine print get you, too?

Ms. Mims. The fine print got me. So I went through a lot of classes, the first-time homebuyers class, through Housing for Mesa. And I went through it twice so I could make sure I understood. And they also get you prepared to know what you're going to get yourself into, that you're going to have to pay your water and the sewer and stuff like that, when you're not used to doing that when you live in an apartment.

The President. Right. Practical lessons, maybe some help on budgeting and understanding what it meant to budget.

Ms. Mims. That's correct.

The President. You know, I bet somebody is listening out there and wonders whether or not he or she can buy a home. I bet there's somebody saying, "Gosh, I don't think a homeownership is—even though I want a home, I'm not so sure I'm able to do so." I hope you hear the story of Monica and Emily. These are people that had a dream and found help and are now realizing their dreams. It's the greatness of America, you know that? Jorge is sitting here. He's got a family to raise, gets a little extra help, making more money, got him a second home, upgrading, family is better off.

What we want is we want this dream to be extended to every neighborhood in America. We want people owning their own home. We want people getting the skills necessary to make a living.

Doug, again, thanks for having us. It's an honor to be here. Doug said, "You look a little antsy. Are you heading over to the ranch?" [Laughter] I said, "I'm not telling you, but I'll be fishing tomorrow." [Laughter]

I'm honored to be here. God bless you all, and God bless America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:02 p.m. at the Carpenters Training Center. In his remarks, he referred to Mike McCarron, executive secretary treasurer, Southwest Regional Council of Carpenters; Mayor Phil Gordon of Phoenix, AZ; Jerry Bisgrove, founder, Stardust Foundation; and Edna McLaughlin, director of education and counseling, Housing for Mesa. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

March 27, 2004

Good morning. This week brought good news about homeownership in America. The Census Bureau reported that new home sales in February rose to an annual pace of 1.16 million homes, a 24-percent increase over the past year. This success follows one of the most impressive years in America's housing industry. More homes were sold in 2003 than ever before. Housing starts last year were at their highest level in a quarter century. Rising home values have helped take the wealth of American households to a new record level.

In our growing economy, more Americans can afford a new home. Incomes are rising. The unemployment rate is falling. Mortgage rates are low. And because of tax relief, Americans have more to save, spend, and invest, and that means millions of American families have moved into their first homes.

Our Nation's 68-percent homeownership rate is the highest ever, and our Government is taking steps to make owning a home a reality for more Americans, especially minorities and those with low incomes. In June 2002, I set the goal of adding 5.5 million new

minority homeowners in America by the end of this decade. Since then, more than 1.5 million minority families have moved into houses of their own, and for the first time, most minorities own their own home.

We are building on this progress. I have signed into law the American Dream Downpayment Act, which will help low-income Americans to afford the downpayment and closing costs on their first home. I'm asking Congress to provide an annual \$200 million for this program. That additional money would help an estimated 40,000 low-income families every year become first-time homeowners. I'm proposing that we make zero downpayment loans available to first-time buyers whose mortgages are guaranteed by the Federal Housing Administration. And this will help about 150,000 families buy homes in the first year alone.

Another obstacle to homeownership is the often complicated process of buying a home and getting a loan. My budget for 2005 would more than double funding for housing counseling services from 2001 levels. A house and a mortgage represent a big personal commitment, and we want to prepare more Americans to make that commitment with confidence. To make homeownership attainable for more of our citizens, I have asked Congress to create a tax credit to encourage the construction of affordable homes. Under my proposal, builders will have an incentive to provide an additional 200,000 affordable homes over 5 years for families with low incomes.

And finally, we are encouraging the real estate and mortgage finance industry to join in our efforts in closing the homeownership gap. More than two dozen major companies and organizations have committed to extending more loans to low-income families, financing the construction of more affordable homes, and providing financial counseling to potential buyers. These policies will make a difference in the lives of millions of Americans.

This week, I met with Lori Benavidez, a single mom living in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Last November, with the help of a Federal homeownership program, she moved into her first home. Here's what Lori says: "I never thought the day would happen

when my girls and I would be sitting in our own home. It is a miracle.”

Every time a family moves into a home of their own, it fulfills a dream, and it shows faith in the future, and that faith is well-placed because America’s economy is strong and it is getting stronger.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:03 a.m. on March 26 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 27. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 26 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at a Ceremony Honoring Seven Nations on Accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

March 29, 2004

Thank you all. Good afternoon, and welcome to the White House.

Fifty-five years ago, the representatives of 12 nations gathered here in Washington to sign the North Atlantic Treaty, which established the most successful military alliance in history. Today we proudly welcome Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. We welcome them into the ranks of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

When NATO was founded, the people of these seven nations were captives to an empire. They endured bitter tyranny. They struggled for independence. They earned their freedom through courage and perseverance, and today they stand with us as full and equal partners in this great Alliance.

It has been my honor to host the Prime Ministers of each new NATO member in the Oval Office. I want to thank them for their friendship. I want to thank them for their leadership. I look forward to working with them to make the world more peaceful and more free. Welcome to America.

I want to thank the foreign and defense ministers of the new NATO members who are with us today. I want to thank the Prime Ministers of Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia, who are with us today. Jaap de Hoop

Scheffer is with us today, who is the Secretary General of NATO. Thank you for coming, Mr. Secretary General. I thank the Ambassadors of all the members of NATO, both old and new.

I want to thank the Vice President, Secretary of State Powell, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, General Dick Myers, General Jones, members of my administration. I want to thank the Members of Congress who are with us today: Majority Leader Bill Frist of the United States Senate; Members of the Senate which voted unanimously in support of the admission of the new members that we welcome today. I want to thank the Members of the House of Representatives who have joined us today. I want to thank those who are here today whose vision years ago helped make this moment a reality. I want to thank other distinguished guests. Welcome.

Today marks a great achievement for each of the nations joining our Alliance. All member nations of NATO must be free and democratic and fully committed to defending the principles of liberty. All member nations must be willing and able to contribute to the common defense of our Alliance. Our seven new members have built free institutions. They’ve increased their military capabilities in the span of a decade. They are stronger nations because of that remarkable effort, and the NATO Alliance is made stronger by their presence.

Since NATO’s founding, the assurance of mutual defense has been a safeguard for peace. As President Truman said, “By this treaty, we are not only seeking to establish freedom from aggression and from the use of force in the North Atlantic community, but we are also actively striving to promote and preserve peace throughout the world.”

Under NATO’s banner, the nations of Europe put aside rivalries that had divided the Continent for centuries. NATO members stood watch on freedom’s borders for two generations of the cold war. Because of NATO’s vigilance, free people lifted the Iron Curtain and tore down the Berlin Wall and replaced dictators with democratic governments.

In the aftermath of this victory, some questioned whether NATO could or should survive the end of the cold war. Then the Alliance proved its enduring worth by stopping ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and by ousting the armies of a tyrant in Kosovo. Some wondered whether NATO could adapt to the new threats of the 21st century. Those doubts were laid to rest on September the 12th, 2001, when NATO invoked for the first time in its history Article 5 of our Charter, which states that an attack against one NATO Ally is an attack against all.

NATO's core mission remains the same, the defense of its members against any aggression. Today, our Alliance faces a new enemy, which has brought death to innocent people from New York to Madrid. Terrorists hate everything this Alliance stands for. They despise our freedom. They fear our unity. They seek to divide us. They will fail. We will not be divided. We will never bow to the violence of a few. We will never—we will face the mortal danger of terrorism, and we will overcome it together.

The countries we welcome today were friends before they were Allies, and they were allies in action before becoming Allies by treaty. Today, all seven of these nations are helping to bring lasting freedom to Afghanistan and Iraq. Bulgaria provided refueling facilities during the early days of Operation Enduring Freedom and has deployed more than 400 soldiers to Iraq. Military engineers from Estonia and Latvia are helping to clear explosive devices from Iraq. Forces from Lithuania and Slovakia are helping to secure Iraq. Romanian troops have sacrificed their lives fighting terrorists in Afghanistan. And troops from Slovenia are serving in the international force that is protecting the city of Kabul in Afghanistan.

Forces from Albania and Croatia and Macedonia are also contributing in Afghanistan or Iraq, proving their mettle as they aspire to NATO membership. These three nations, joined together under the Adriatic Charter, are building strong democracies at home that can contribute to NATO efforts abroad. The United States supports these efforts. The door to NATO will remain open until the whole of Europe is united in freedom and in peace.

As witness to some of the great crimes of the last century, our new members bring moral clarity to the purposes of our Alliance. They understand our cause in Afghanistan and in Iraq, because tyranny for them is still a fresh memory. These nations know that when great democracies fail to confront danger, far worse peril can follow. They know that aggression left unchecked can rob millions of their liberty and their lives. And so now, as members of NATO, they are stepping forward to secure the lives and freedom of others.

The NATO Alliance now flies seven new flags and reaches from the Bay of Biscay to the Black Sea. And Europe, once the source of global conflict, is now a force for stability and peace. Our great Transatlantic Alliance has met and overcome great dangers in the past, and our work in NATO is not done. In the past, many assumed that NATO represented a pledge that America would come to the aid of Europe. Today, by our words and by our actions, we know that NATO means much more. It is a solemn commitment that America and Europe are joined together to advance the cause of freedom and peace.

NATO is acting to meet the challenges of our time. NATO forces are securing Afghanistan. NATO ships are patrolling the Mediterranean, and NATO is supporting the Polish-led division in Iraq. NATO is widening the circle of its friends by creating a new chapter in our relationship with Russia. NATO members are reaching out to the nations of the Middle East to strengthen our ability to fight terror and to provide for our common security. And we're discussing how we can support and increase the momentum of freedom in the greater Middle East.

Our unity and our commitment to freedom carried us to victory in the cold war, and they showed us the way to victory in the war on terror. Together, Europe and America can lead peaceful nations against the dangers of our time. Europe and America can advance freedom and give hope and support to those who seek to lift the yoke of isolation and fear and oppression. That is the mission that history has set for NATO—this great and confident alliance of 26 nations—and we proudly accept this mission.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:42 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, Defense Minister Nikolai Svinarov, and Foreign Minister Solomon Pasi of Bulgaria; Prime Minister Juhan Parts, Defense Minister Margus Hanson, and Foreign Minister Kristiina Ojuland of Estonia; Prime Minister Indulis Emsis, Defense Minister Atis Slakteris, and Foreign Minister Rihards Piks of Latvia; Prime Minister Algirdas Mykolas Brazauskas, Defense Minister Linas Linkevicius, and Foreign Minister Antanas Valionis of Lithuania; Prime Minister Adrian Nastase, Defense Minister Ioan Mircea Pascu, and Foreign Minister Mircea Dan Geoana of Romania; Prime Minister Mikulas Dzurinda, Defense Minister Juraj Liska, and Foreign Minister Eduard Kukan of Slovakia; Prime Minister Anton Rop, Defense Minister Anton Grizold, and Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel of Slovenia; Prime Minister Fatos Nano of Albania; Prime Minister Ivo Sanader of Croatia; Prime Minister Branko Crvenkovski of Macedonia; NATO Secretary General Jakob "Jaap" Gijshert de Hoop Scheffer; Gen. James L. Jones, USMC, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, Europe; and former President Slobodan Milosevic of the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Remarks on the National Economy in Appleton, Wisconsin

March 30, 2004

Thank you all very much. I appreciate the warm welcome. Please be seated. It can get pretty cold here in the winter, but that's a really warm welcome, for which I'm grateful. Thanks so much for coming out.

Bill, thank you for your kind introduction. Thank you for putting up with my entourage. Thank you for setting this deal up.

I've got some things I want to share with the good people of Fox Valley and Wisconsin, some of the challenges that we face as a country, my absolute determination to overcome those challenges, to lead our Nation for a better day for every citizen.

I've got a lot of friends here in this State. I took one of them with me. *[Laughter]* And that was Tommy Thompson. Tommy is doing a great job. I gave him a tough job to do,

and he's handling it with such class. He's really a fine, fine leader. You trained him well. *[Laughter]* I was looking for him on his Harley, driving in today, but I guess at 38 degrees, it's a little chilly to be on your Harley. *[Laughter]* But he sends his best, and I want to thank you very much for raising Tommy the right way.

I also want to thank all the entrepreneurs who are here. One of things—I love to be in the presence of entrepreneurs and small-business owners and dreamers and doers. After all, it's—to me, it's one of the characteristics of our country, the fact that we're an optimistic people, the fact that we're risktakers, the fact that we're job creators, that we care about our fellow citizens. The characteristics of America are what really enable me to say that there's no challenge we can't overcome by working together. I appreciate so very much the—*[applause]*.

I want to thank the Chamber of Commerce, Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce for hosting me. I want to appreciate the mayor, Tim Hanna, for coming out to say hello. My advice to the mayor is, fill the potholes and empty the garbage. *[Laughter]* All will be well. *[Laughter]* But Tim, I appreciate it. It's good to see you again. Thank you for your leadership and your service. I want to thank all the State and local officials who have come today. I also appreciate your service to your communities and your State.

Today when I landed, I met Gloria Grandone. Where are you, Gloria? There she is, up there. Gloria is a volunteer, a person who is a mentor, a person who is involved with helping people go to college, a person who helps people become more self-sufficient and financially secure. The reason I bring up Gloria and her willingness to volunteer, see, I think that happens to be the strength of the country, the fact that there are fellow citizens who love a neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves.

Oftentimes, America is described as being strong because of our military—we'll keep our military strong—or we're described as being a strong nation because we're wealthy compared to other nations. And that's good, by the way. It's better to be a wealthy nation than a poor nation. But nevertheless, that's not our strength. Our strength lies in the

hearts and souls of our citizens. Our strength in America exists because there are people like Gloria who are willing to take time out of their life to help somebody.

My call to our fellow citizens is to love your neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself. Mentor a child. Put your arm around somebody who hurts. Find shelter for the homeless, food for the hungry. All of us working together can change America, one soul at a time. Gloria, thank you for the example you set.

Let me walk through the last little bit of history so that when I make my point that we've overcome challenges, you'll understand the challenges that we have overcome. First of all, the stock market began to decline in March of 2000. That matters, by the way, if you're concerned about savings and you own stocks. In other words, the psychology of the country began to get affected when people started opening up their accounts of their portfolios and noticed that their worth was diminishing. A lot of people who retired noticed their worth was diminishing. Pension funds—if you run a 401(k), you noticed that things were changing.

And then the country headed into a recession in early 2001. A recession means we're going backwards, not forwards. A recession is negative growth for three quarters. If you ask any business leader here, they can tell you what it's like to try to manage during a recession. There's uncertainty. Your workers are getting anxious. Sometimes you had to lay people off. A recession is tough for a country to handle. It's a challenge. The challenge is how do you come out of the recession. We passed tax cuts, which I'm going to talk about in a minute, which made the recession one of the shallowest in our Nation's history.

But then we had another challenge shortly thereafter, and that is an enemy attacked us. We weren't thinking about attacks in the scale of which they attacked us. It was a new thought for America. After all, most of us baby boomers grew up thinking that oceans would protect us forever. It changed our way of thinking. The attack means that anybody in a position like I'm in must deal with threats before they materialize. That's one of the lessons of September the 11th. We just can't

sit back and hope that oceans protect us now. We must take every threat seriously.

It also affected our economy. It hurt us economically. We lost a million jobs shortly after the attacks of September the 11th, and that hurt. Remember, we had to shut down the stock market. Airplanes weren't getting up in the air. It affected us; it just affected us. And yet, we're a strong nation who refused to be terrorized. We refused to give in to the terrorists.

We resolved as a nation that we would do everything we can to protect our homeland. But the best way to protect the homeland is to chase the terrorists down and bring them to justice, which is precisely what we're doing.

I laid out a doctrine that said, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist." By the way, when the President says something, you better mean it. It turns out in this job—I, of course, meant it. And the Taliban found out what we meant. They didn't yield, and so I unleashed a great United States military. I did so to uphold the doctrine. We wiped out the ability for the terrorists to use Afghanistan as a training facility.

We also liberated people, liberated about 25 million people from the clutches of one of the most barbaric regimes in the history of mankind, so barbaric—[applause]. Now the country is changing. There's women's rights. There's equality under the law. Young girls now go to school, many for the first time ever, thanks to the United States and our coalition of liberators.

We started to recover from September the 11th. The resolve of the country, by the way, is incredible when tested. It's a nation of people of deep character. Perhaps it's because we've got a lot of people of deep faith in our country.

But we discovered shortly thereafter that there were some of our citizens who must have not been raised right, because they didn't tell the truth. There was corporate scandals in America that betrayed the trust. When somebody betrays the trust in our world, it can affect confidence. I mean, if you're not sure whether or not the accountants are telling the truth, it's hard to invest. These corporate wrongdoers cost people

their jobs, cost a lot of people their savings. It affected our psychology. We had to overcome the hurdle.

We passed tough laws, by the way, in Washington, and now the message is very clear: We will not tolerate wrongdoing in the boardrooms of America; we will hold you to account if you lie or cheat. But we overcame that.

As I mentioned to you, it's important for this country never to forget the lessons of September the 11th, and that is, when we see a threat, we must deal with it before it fully materializes. That's one of the clear lessons of that horrible day in our history. I looked at intelligence from Iraq and saw a threat. The United States Congress looked at the same intelligence, and the Members of Congress saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. And so, in the fall of 2002, I went to the United Nations Security Council and said, "We all see a threat. Let's come together and deal with the threat. Let's say to Mr. Saddam Hussein, 'You have one final chance to disclose and disarm, for the sake of peace and security.' "

A lot of people remembered that he was a person that had used weapons of mass destruction on his own people. He's a person that had terrorized the neighborhood. He's a person that was paying suiciders to kill innocent citizens. He's the person that tortured people. He's the person that had rape rooms. He's the person that had mass graves. He was a threat. Saddam Hussein once again chose defiance, and so I had a choice to make: Do I trust the word of a madman, or do I take action to defend America. Given that choice, I will defend our country every time.

This is an historic time. We're going to get it right in Iraq. Iraq will emerge as a free society.

I'll tell you a very interesting story. I was having kobe beef with Prime Minister Koizumi from Japan. Laura and I were over there, and by the way, she sends her greetings. She's a great First Lady, I might add. Very interesting conversation, because we're talking about how we should work together to deal with Mr. Kim Chong-il and the nuclear weapons program on the Korean Penin-

sula. In other words, we were working together on a common threat. It dawned on me in the midst of the conversation, had we not gotten the post-World War II peace right, an American President and a Japanese Prime Minister wouldn't be talking about how to deal with a common threat. It also dawned on me during the course of the conversation that when we get it right in Iraq, some day an American President will be talking to an elected President or Prime Minister of a country in the heart of the Middle East, talking about how to deal with the threats of a future generation.

These are historic times. A free and democratic Iraq will change the world.

It's a hard job in Iraq. After all, there are terrorists who want to stop the progress of liberty. And there's a reason: They understand that a free society is not in their interests; a free society is a peaceful society; a free society is one that will put the conditions of terrorism out of business. That's why we love freedom in America. See, the other thing I believe in, I believe that freedom is not America's gift to the world. I believe freedom is the Almighty's gift to each man and woman in this world.

On your TV screens, starting in 2002, were the words "March to War." I don't know if you remember that. That's not conducive for creating jobs. Think about what it means, "March to War." It's a negative thought. One of the hurdles we had to overcome was the business about going to war. If you're trying to plan your future, whether you're an employer or employee, you're not going to be all that optimistic, thinking that your country's marching to war. We're now marching to peace. We've overcome that hurdle.

We've overcome four major hurdles, when you think about it. People say, "How can you be so optimistic about our country?" And the answer is, "Because I've seen what we've come through." And guess what? Our economy is growing. Interest rates are low. Inflation is low. Homeownership rates are the highest in history. More people are owning their home. There is a minority homeownership gap in America, but now more minorities own a home than ever before, which is incredibly positive. When people own something, they have a vital stake in the future

of this country. Manufacturing activity is up. The unemployment rate today is lower than the average rate in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. We've overcome a lot.

Wisconsin is helping lead the growth of this country. Farms, factories, and offices are shipping high-quality goods all across America and all throughout the world. The State's unemployment rate is down from a year ago, below the national average, I might add. The economy is on a path of growth because we acted.

You see, the role of Government is not to create wealth but to create an environment that encourages economic vitality and growth, is to create the grounds for the entrepreneurial spirit to flourish. That's the role of Government. And that's why I went to Congress and said, "Listen, we've got problems, economic problems, and the best way to deal with those problems is let people keep more of their own money." When a person has more of her own money, she demands an additional good or a service. And the way our economy works, somebody will meet that new demand for a good or a service by producing a good or a service. And when somebody produces a good or a service, somebody is more likely to keep a job or find work. That's the way the economy works. The tax relief came at just the right time.

We also accomplished some other objectives in the tax relief. Remember, I argued that if we're going to provide tax relief, let's provide it for everybody who pays taxes, so that Government is not in the business of picking winners and losers when it comes to tax relief. The fairest way to deal with tax relief is to say, "If you pay taxes, you get relief."

We also increased the child credit to \$1,000 per child. By the way, that's very helpful if you happen to be a mom or a dad. We reduced the marriage penalty. My question to the Congress is, what kind of Tax Code is it that penalizes marriage? We ought to be encouraging marriage. After-tax incomes in America have been lifted by 8.4 percent since the end of 2000. People have got more money, and it's making a big difference.

I also want you to know I understand job creation. Seventy percent of all new jobs are

created by small businesses. It seems like, if that's the case and you're worried about somebody finding work, you want to make sure the small-business agenda is vibrant and foremost on our agenda. And it is. Because, you see, most small businesses are Subchapter S or sole proprietorships. I see a lot of people nodding their heads. A sole proprietorship or Subchapter S corporation means that the business pays tax at the individual income tax. And if you're paying tax at the individual income tax as a small business and all taxes get reduced, small businesses have got more money to invest and to expand.

We also provided incentives for capital investment. We raised the amount of the limit to \$100,000 from \$25,000 that the small business can deduct for new capital expenditures. What I'm telling you is, is that small business is a direct beneficiary of the tax plan that we passed. It's an integral part of making sure that the environment for the entrepreneurial spirit is just right.

Another way to make sure the entrepreneurial spirit is strong is to get rid of the death tax. The death tax is a bad tax. A lot of farmers want to leave their farm to their family and not to the Government. A lot of small-business owners are dreaming big dreams, not only because they want to help somebody find a job but they also want to leave their business to whomever they choose. The problem with the death tax is, they tax you while you're alive, and then they tax you again after you die. And that doesn't seem fair. And a lot of people who own a small business or a farm, in order to pay the death tax, have to liquidate their assets in order to do so, which means it is impossible to pass your assets on, in many cases, to whomever you choose. Congress wisely put the death tax on its way to extinction, for the good of the entrepreneurial spirit here in America.

This economy is going through a fundamental change. We're growing, which is great. One of the reasons we're growing is because we're incredibly productive. You've heard about productivity increases. That means one worker that used to be able to produce 5 units can now produce 15 units. That's what productivity means. A productive society is a society that will generate more

wealth, and that's very positive. In other words, the more productive you are, the wealthier your society becomes. A productive society means America will remain more competitive, will be able to expand and grow, not only internally but externally, because if you're a productive company here in America, you have a better chance to compete. And remember, our system is based upon competition. If you're a productive company in America, you have a better chance to compete with companies overseas.

It's a fact that the more productive you are as a worker, the better you get paid. But the problem is, as I mentioned, many companies are able to fill new orders and don't have the—don't have a need to expand because they're more productive. In other words, it's possible to grow our economy and not have people find new jobs. And that's a problem we face today for some workers.

This is called a period of transition. That's an economist's word for things aren't going too well for you. *[Laughter]* And I understand that. I understand that people are worried about the job they have. They're worried about whether their children can stay close to home where they were raised and find work. A productive society is positive in many ways, but for the worker who needs new skills, it's not so positive in the short term.

So we have got to do something about it. We've got to deal with the economy the way it is. Many people are working, and more and more people are working. But there are some who, frankly, feel like they're being left behind, and that's not right. The role of Government is more than just providing unemployment insurance; it's to provide a sound strategy to make sure our economy continues to grow and people find the skills necessary to be productive employees in the 21st century. Those are the challenges we face.

Some in our Nation's Capital respond a little differently than I will. They want to increase Federal spending dramatically. The problem with that plan is somebody has to pay for it, and that somebody is going to be you. That's who will pay for it. In order to pay for more spending, you'll hear the language "tax on the rich." When you start raising income-tax rates up, you're raising on small businesses. If the tax relief helps small

businesses, the corollary to that is that when you raise those taxes, it means small businesses are going to pay. If 70 percent of the new jobs are created by small businesses, it makes absolutely no sense to be taking money out of their coffers to expand the role of the Federal Government.

Tax and spend is the enemy of job creation. Taxing and spending in excessive amounts in Washington, DC, is not creating an environment for the entrepreneurial spirit to flourish. Quite the contrary. It will diminish demand. It will make it difficult for people to start their own businesses and to expand.

There's another issue we're facing as well in the Nation's Capital. That's whether or not we're going to build walls around America, whether we're going to isolate ourselves from the world. I call it "economic isolationism." When you hear people talk about, "Let us reconsider free trade agreements," what they're really saying is, is that perhaps we ought to wall ourself off from the rest of the world. See, I think that would be absolutely wrong for America to be so pessimistic about our ability to compete that we've become economic isolationists, that we erect barriers to trade, that we're so—that we lack confidence, that we say to our farmers and ranchers, our entrepreneurs that we don't think you can compete. See, I believe just the opposite. I believe this Nation can compete anywhere, any time, anyplace, so long as the rules are fair.

Look at it this way. America's got 5 percent of the world's population. That means there's 95 percent of the people out there that should be buying products that say "Made in the USA." It's important to understand that exports, the ability to sell overseas, to be able to make something here in Wisconsin and sell it elsewhere, is an important part of your economy. Dairy farmers are selling their goods overseas.

I read this, and I wasn't quite sure—it says that Wisconsin cheese is being sold in France. *[Laughter]* That's a good cheese. Oshkosh Truck sells overseas. Harley Davidson sells overseas. Wisconsin exports last year were worth \$11.5 billion. See, Wisconsin is making products the world wants to buy. Wisconsin's exports to Canada rose last year.

Exports to Mexico rose. Exports to China rose fourfold in the last 4 years. In other words, people are finding jobs here in Wisconsin because they're helping make products that people want in other countries. Exports equal jobs. It's important for people to understand that.

Nationwide, 97 percent of all U.S. exporters are small and medium-sized businesses. You know, a lot of folks say, "Exports—you got to be a big guy to be able to export." No, there's a lot of small-business owners and entrepreneurs and medium-sized businesses that are making products, goods, and services, that people want. An important part of our economy is the small-business sector, as I told you. Companies with fewer than 20 employees make up nearly 70 percent of all U.S. exporting firms. So when you hear the talk about, "Let's wall off America from the rest of the world," I want you to remember that we're talking about walling off small businesses from opportunities—opportunities to sell a product and, therefore, opportunities to eventually hire somebody.

The other thing it's important for people to understand is that foreign companies recognize how great the U.S. workforce is. I mean, we're very good at what we do. We've got fantastic workers here in America, incredibly productive people. And therefore, there's a lot of foreign-owned companies that are interested in bringing their business here. A hundred thousand workers in Wisconsin work for foreign-owned companies, half of them in manufacturing. Fiskars Brands employs U.S. workers. It's a Finnish company. Kikkoman Foods, they make soy sauce. They employ U.S. personnel.

In other words, when you hear about trade, just remember, trade means selling product overseas, but it also means welcoming foreign capital here in the United States to employ people, so they can find work. It's an important part of the equation to know that confident trade policy not only means the sale of goods, but confident trade policy means people want to set up their plants here.

I was in Greer, South Carolina, at a BMW plant selling BMWs into Germany. We've got great workers in America. We ought not to

be fearful of the future. We ought to be confident of our capacity to compete.

And so, the question is, what do we do about trade policy? And that's what I want to spend a little time talking about. Five—for five decades, Presidents have made the decision that U.S. markets should be open, for the good of our consumers. In other words, when there's competition, it generally means better price. Other markets haven't been open to U.S. goods. So it seems like to me, the logical thing to do, rather than shutting down our own market, which will hurt consumers and hurt opportunity, is to spend time opening up other people's markets. And so when you hear me talk about negotiating trade agreements, really what we're doing is leveling the playing field. What we're really doing is make sure America has a chance to compete on the same terms that people can sell into our market.

And if they don't respond, there's some things we can do. See, if we say, "Our market is open, and yours isn't, so open yours up," rather than shutting ours down and creating trade wars which will jeopardize jobs, make it harder for small business to exist, there are things we can do. For example, we filed the first World Trade Organization case against China because of their unfair tax policy. We got Canada to stop exporting subsidized dairy products into the United States. We won a major international case against Mexico's telecommunications barriers. In other words, this administration is not going to—refuses to accept the doctrine of economic isolationism but instead says, "We'll use the tools necessary to make sure that the playing field is level."

Japan is buying American apples. If you're an apple grower, that's good news. India is buying American almonds. My point is, not only are we focused on industries like the semiconductor industry, we want people buying U.S. farm products too. We're good at growing things here in the United States.

Open trade means fair trade. It means that the buyer and the seller—that if we're a buying nation, it means the selling nation must open its markets too. That's what I'm talking about. It's important to be confident here in America because we're good at what we do, and our policies ought to reflect that.

A lot of talk about jobs going overseas. There's a lot of uncertainty in the marketplace for some people looking for work. I understand that—I understand that. But the best way to deal with that in my judgment is to make sure America remains the best place in the world to do business so that our job base will expand. The more vibrant the small-business sector, the more likely it is somebody's going to find work. The more vibrant the business sector, the more likely it is jobs will stay right here at home. That's what people have got to understand.

Let me talk real quick about some things we need to do. We need to stop harassing small-business owners and entrepreneurs with endless amounts of regulation and paperwork. I know there's a lot of Federal forms. My problem is, I can't guarantee that they're ever read.

Secondly, like you, I'm concerned about the rising costs of health care. It's an issue for consumers. It's an issue for employers. If you talk to small-business owners, they're concerned about being able to provide their employees with a good package for health care. There are some things we can do. One thing we must not do is turn over the health care industry to the Federal Government. There's a philosophical tug-of-war in Washington, DC. I believe the Federal Government would make matters worse. I believe the marketplace and empowering consumers will make matters better.

One way we can control health care costs is to allow small businesses to share risk through association health care plans. In other words, big companies are able to pool risk because they've got a lot of employees over which they can spread risk. Small businesses don't have that advantage. I believe small businesses ought to be able to pool risk across jurisdictional boundary to get the same benefits, the same economies of purchase, that big businesses get.

We passed a new aspect to health care, which I think a lot of small-business owners and employees will find very interesting. They're called health savings accounts. This is the opportunity for people to put money into a health savings account tax-free, earn money tax-free, withdraw it tax-free to meet certain health care costs, and then any major

medical or larger health care costs are covered by a catastrophic plan. Now, what this does is it puts the consumer back in charge of health care decisions, as opposed to bureaucracies or Government. What it also does is it helps control the cost of health care. If you look into it as a small-business employer, I think you'll find it is an imaginative way to help your employees have affordable health care.

The other thing we need to do in order to make sure we hold the cost of health care down is to have medical liability reform at the Federal level. There's too many junk lawsuits that are running up the cost of medicine. A lot of docs practice defensive medicine because they're afraid of getting sued. But guess who pays? Small-business owners and employees, that's who pays. A lot of docs are tired of getting sued, so they're moving out. Maybe it's happened in your community. That means not only is the cost of medicine going up, the cost of health care going up, but there's fewer docs available to practice their trade.

Listen, if you get hurt, you ought to have your day in court. But the system in many places looks like a lottery, and there's only one winner, and those are the trial lawyers who sue and sue and sue.

We need other tort reform to make sure America's a good place to do business so jobs stay at home. We're close to getting a reform on class-action lawsuits. Perhaps some of you have been caught up in these class-actions lawsuits. It's—again, sometimes it's a gravy train, not for those who are the plaintiffs but the people representing the plaintiffs. We're close, but the trial bar is tough in Washington, DC. They're able to hold up a lot of stuff in the United States Senate, which is discouraging, because good tort reform will make it easier for people to find a job here at home, will make sure the environment for the entrepreneurs is good and strong.

There's another thing we need to do here in America. Look, if you're a manufacturer in Wisconsin, you need to make sure you've got energy so you can manufacture your product. We have a problem in America because we don't have an energy plan. It doesn't make much sense when you're a giant nation like ours not to have an energy plan,

but we can't get it out right now. It's stuck. I'm calling upon the House and the Congress to reconcile their differences and get an energy plan on my desk that will encourage—to my desk that will encourage clean coal technology so we can burn coal, a plentiful supply, in a clean way, so that we can encourage more exploration of natural gas.

Natural gas is absolutely vital for many manufacturers here in Wisconsin. You've got to have energy in order to make sure your business is viable. We need to modernize our electricity system. We got a wake-up call last summer when parts of our country were shocked by a rolling blackout. If you're a businessowner and you're trying to expand your business, if you're trying to make a product and if you're worried about whether or not you're going to get any power, it's very difficult to be optimistic about your future. We need to encourage conservation. What we need is an energy plan so we're less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

We're debating a highway bill right now in Congress. I look forward to signing a 6-year bill without raising your gas taxes. We don't need to be raising the Federal gas tax. Gas taxes would hurt the economy. There are some in the other party in Washington who would like to raise gas taxes. I think it would be wrong. I think it would be damaging to the economy, not positive to the economy.

Also, speaking about highways, the Nation must stay on the leading edge of technology. I want to make sure broadband technology is available for every home in America by the year 2007, and that, shortly thereafter, there's adequate competition so consumers get to choose. There's nothing like choice, by the way, if you're a consumer, to make sure that a product stays reasonably priced. And there are ways to do that.

We ought not to tax access to broadband at the United States—in the United States Congress. And we've got to make sure that the regulatory environment is conducive to making sure broadband extends throughout America. There's some practical things we can do. But for America to be competitive, to make sure jobs stay at home, we've got to stay on the leading edge of technological change. And the broadband technology is

going to be—it's going to be just amazing. It's going to be amazing for small-business owners. It's going to be amazing for people who work out of their home and are productive citizens. It's going to be amazing for education opportunities. It's going to be amazing for health care. We need it, and we need to get it out as quickly as possible in a price-sensitive way for the consumers.

Finally, these tax cuts that I'm talking about are set to expire. Congress giveth, and the Congress taketh away. *[Laughter]* And if you're a small-business owner, it's hard to plan for your future if you're uncertain about your tax liabilities. If you're wondering whether or not the tax—taxes that—tax relief today is going to be taken away, it is not good for planning. People who plan need to have a steady environment, not an unpredictable environment.

It's also not good if you're a mom or a dad raising your child to be paying more taxes right now. And if Congress doesn't make the child credit permanent, it means it's a tax increase on somebody with a child. If you're married, that marriage penalty is going back up unless Congress makes the tax relief permanent. If you are in the 10-percent bracket, it means that bracket is going to become squeezed if Congress doesn't make the tax cuts permanent. For the sake of job creation, for the sake of keeping jobs here at home, we need to make the tax cuts a permanent part of our Tax Code.

Now that I've got you stuck here—*[laughter]*—we're going to talk about education right quick. A economy which is changing, an economy in transition, is an economy that better make sure people are educated to take advantage of the new jobs being created. In a lot of parts of our country, there are jobs going begging because people don't have the skills necessary to fill them. In some older industries, jobs are not as prevalent as some of the new industries. Nurses, for example—there's a nursing shortage. We've got to make sure people get the skills necessary to be able to fill the new jobs.

We can't make somebody say—decide to go to work. That's in their mind. But we darn sure can help somebody get the skills necessary to take advantage of the jobs which are being created. We can help somebody

become a more productive citizen. Remember, higher productivity for a worker means better wages.

And I've got some plans to do so. It starts, by the way, by making sure every child can read and write and add and subtract. We passed a good law in Washington. It's called the No Child Left Behind Act. The principles behind that law are, one, we trust local people to make the right decisions for the communities in which they live when it comes to their public schools. But for the first time, the Federal Government is asking the question, are we getting any return for our money we're spending? It's called accountability. It means that—[*applause*].

We've increased the Title I or elementary and secondary school budget by 49 percent since 2001, which is good. But as importantly, we've started to say to the State of Wisconsin, "Measure, so we can determine whether or not it's working." How can you tell whether or not things are going well in the education system if you don't measure? You can't. And guess what happens in a system that doesn't measure? Kids just get shuffled through. And guess who gets shuffled through? The so-called hard-to-teach. That would be low-income, inner-city, African Americans, parents who may not speak English as a first language. It's easy to quit on those kids. "Just going to move them through." What accountability says is that we're tired of moving kids through. We're going to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. We believe every child can learn.

Things are improving around the country because we are holding people to account. By the way, the accountability system is not to punish anybody. It's to determine whether or not the curriculum is working. It's to make sure that the methodology makes sense. It's also to catch problems early and correct them before it's too late. There are some problems that are almost too late. We've got plans to help junior high and high school kids learn the basics of reading and math before it is too late—very good intervention programs.

But one of the things I'm most excited about is using our community college system. We've got a great strategy to make sure the community college system is a vibrant part of job training programs all across America.

I hope you've got a good community college system here. The definition of a good system, by the way, is one that is flexible and open-minded, so that when employers come and say, "These are the kinds of people we need to hire," that the curriculum changes and actually trains people for the jobs which exist.

There's nothing like the Chamber of Commerce being able to say, "We've got a fantastic community college system here. If you move your business here, the community college will make sure—will help train people for the jobs you need." A more productive worker is a worker that's going to make more money.

I remember going to Mesa Community College and met a woman there that was a graphic design artist. I think she'd been one for 15 years. She got a scholarship—and by the way, there's money available to help people go back to school. She got a scholarship to go back to the community college, and she took a technical course. Upon graduation, which—I can't remember the exact number of months it was, but it was a reasonable period of time—her starting job at Cable One paid her more than her 15th year as a graphic design artist.

That's the definition of becoming a more productive worker. If you increase your productivity by going back to school, it makes you obviously more employable for the jobs which exist, but it also raises your own standard of living. Education is a crucial part to make sure that jobs here in America stay home and that the job base can expand in a confident way.

So those are some reasonable things that the country needs to do: to stand with the people, not stand against them; to make sure that we unleash the great talent of America; to make sure that we capture the entrepreneurial spirit which makes this country so unique and such an exciting place for people to live; practical things to do to make sure jobs stay here at home and people can work and do their duty as a responsible citizen.

Let me conclude by telling—speaking about responsibility, I do think one of the interesting things that's happening in America is we are ushering in a period of personal responsibility, which stands in stark contrast to kind of an old culture which said, "If it

feels good, do it,” and “If you’ve got a problem, blame somebody else.” People in the country are beginning to understand that there is a—you’re responsible for loving your children. If you’re fortunate enough to be a mom or a dad, you’re responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you’re worried about the quality of the education in which you—in the community in which you live, you’re responsible for doing something about it. Just don’t hope for some magic response from a faraway Government. If you’re a CEO in corporate America, you’re responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in this new responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we’d like to be loved ourselves.

We’ve got a fabulous country. There’s nothing we can’t overcome. Thank you for coming today. May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:35 a.m. at the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center. In his remarks, he referred to Bill Welch, president, Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce & Industry, who introduced the President; Mayor Tim Hanna of Appleton, WI; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea.

Remarks to Wisconsin First-Responders in Appleton

March 30, 2004

Thank you very much. I was just looking for a salad. [*Laughter*] Thank you all for your welcome. Thanks for letting me barge in. Please sit down.

Ed, thanks for letting me come in to say something to our first-responders here in this State. First, I want to thank you for your service to our country. We’re at war, and we better be ready on all fronts. And so the first-responder effort and the strategy with the local, State, and Federal government is really an important part of making sure that we do everything we can to do our solemn duty, which is to protect our fellow citizens from harm.

We’ve got a big and vast country, which makes the task particularly tough. So the best

way to protect our citizens from harm is to find the enemy, bring them to justice, to get them before they try to get us. And that’s exactly what the country is trying to—[*applause*].

We’re on the hunt. There’s a lot of really fine folks wearing this Nation’s uniform that are making the world and America more safe and secure. If you happen to have a relative in the military, you thank them on behalf of the Commander in Chief for this job they’re doing and for the sacrifice that they’re making. This military of ours is fantastic. It’s really got unbelievably capable people. My job is to make sure they get the best—the best equipment, the best training. Any time you put anybody in harm’s way, we have a solemn duty to make sure that they’re well-equipped. And there are a lot of good folks out there running them down right now, and that’s exactly what this Government must do and will continue to do.

I am—I just came from giving a speech on the economy, but part of the challenges we face is—my job as the Commander in Chief is to provide people as direct assessment I can about the future of this country. And the problem we face right now is, we love freedom, and we’re not going to change, and the people that we fight hate freedom. That’s just the way it is.

I’ve always felt that September the 11th was going to be—the type of war that started that day was going to be the type of war that I constantly have to explain to the American people. It’s going to be different. I suspect there’s some old vets here. It’s easy to find infantry and airplanes and a flotilla of ships. It’s hard to find people that are so cold-blooded in their murder that they hide in caves and the dark corners of cities. But that’s what we’re going to do. We’re going to find them.

The other thing is, is that you’ve just got to know that any time you see a threat, after September the 11th, you’ve got to take it seriously. It used to be that oceans would protect us, that we could say, “Well, there’s a threat over here. We can deal with it if we feel like it, but we’re protected by oceans.” September the 11th taught us another lesson, that this Nation must always deal with threats before they fully materialize, that we’ve got

to—in order to do our duty, in order for me to do mine as the Commander in Chief, if we see a threat, we'll take action of some kind. Obviously, the military option is the last option, not the first.

But I want to remind you that I saw a threat. I looked at the intelligence and saw a threat in Iraq. The United States Congress looked at the very same intelligence, and it saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat as well. We went back to the United Nations and said, "Look, this guy is a problem. He's a threat. He used gas on his own people. He used weapons of mass destruction on his own people. He's a—we've got to take it seriously. September the 11th taught us a lesson." So we came together and said, "Look, get rid of your weapons, Mr. Saddam Hussein." He said, "No." So I was faced with a choice: Do I trust the word of a madman, or do I do my duty to defend America? And given that choice, I will defend our country every time.

We're living in historic times. It's a different kind of war, and all of us are called to do our part. And I want to thank you. I came by to thank—they said there's some people who are on the frontlines of helping us secure the country. I said, "I want to come by." I don't care about your politics. What I do care about is the fact that you're serving, and I wanted to come by and thank you for that. I want to thank you for doing everything you can to help somebody, to prepare our country. I just want you to know, I'm going to do my part too.

It's a fantastic country we have. It's a—it's been such an amazing experience to see the character of this Nation, a nation which refuses to buckle under to the threat of terrorism, a nation which showed incredible resolve, a nation in which firefighters were willing to rush into burning buildings to save their fellow citizens, a nation also which has got an incredible amount of compassion. You know what I'm talking about when I talk about people who are willing to love their neighbor just like they love themselves in the community in which you live. To me, that's the courage of the country which defines us, but it's also the heart of the country which defines us as well.

So thanks for letting me come by to say hi. I'm keeping office hours now, so I've got to head back—[laughter]—head back over yonder, as they say in Texas. [Laughter] But I, again, want to thank you for your service.

May God bless your work. May God bless your families, and may God continue to bless our great country. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:39 p.m. at the Radisson Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Ed Gleason, administrator, Wisconsin Emergency Management; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks Announcing That National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice Will Provide Public Testimony to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States *March 30, 2004*

Today I have informed the Commission on Terrorist Attacks Against the United States that my National Security Adviser, Dr. Condoleezza Rice, will provide public testimony. I've also advised Chairman Kean and Vice Chairman Hamilton that Vice President Cheney and I will jointly meet with all members of the Commission in a private session.

This Commission has been charged with a crucial task. To prevent future attacks, we must understand the methods of our enemies. The terrorist threat being examined by the Commission is still present, still urgent, and still demands our full attention.

From the day the panel was created, I have directed executive branch agencies and members of my staff to cooperate with the Commission. Recognizing the exceptional nature of this inquiry, we have given Commission members access to relevant Presidential daily briefings, to my communications with foreign leaders, and to internal White House communications.

More than 800 members of the administration have been interviewed. More than 20 White House officials have met with the Commission or soon will do so. Dr. Rice herself has already met privately with the Commission for 4 hours. I've ordered this level of cooperation, because I consider it necessary to gaining a complete picture of the

months and years that preceded the murder of our fellow citizens on September the 11th, 2001.

As the Commission has done its work, I've also been concerned, as has Dr. Rice, that an important principle be upheld: A President and his advisers, including his Adviser for National Security Affairs, must be able to communicate freely and privately without being compelled to reveal those communications to the legislative branch. This principle of the separation of powers is protected by the Constitution, is recognized by the courts, and has been defended by Presidents of both political parties. We have observed this principle while also seeking ways for Dr. Rice to testify, so that the public record is full and accurate.

Now the Commission and leaders of the United States Congress have given written assurances that the appearance of the National Security Adviser will not be used as precedent in the conduct of future inquiries. The leaders of Congress and the Commission agree—they agree with me that the circumstances of this case are unique, because the events of September the 11th, 2001, were unique. At my direction, Judge Gonzales has informed the Commission that Dr. Rice will participate in an open public hearing.

Our Nation must never forget the loss or the lessons of September the 11th, and we must not assume that the danger has passed. The United States will confront gathering dangers to our freedom and security. The Commission knows its responsibility to collect vital information and to present it to the American people. And I know my responsibility as well to act against the continuing threat and to protect the American people. I have made that pledge to my fellow citizens, and I will keep it.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:46 p.m. in the James S. Brady Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Thomas H. Kean, Chairman, and Lee H. Hamilton, Vice Chairman, National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (9/11 Commission); and Counsel to the President Alberto R. Gonzales.

Remarks Honoring Members of the Baseball Hall of Fame

March 31, 2004

Thank you all for coming. Laura and I are honored and thrilled that you're here. We have a fair amount of lunches and dinners here, and I've got a confession to make. This is my favorite one. *[Laughter]* It's kind of like having your baseball card collection spread out in real life. *[Laughter]*

Some of you were here the last time we invited the Hall of Famers here. It was one of the first lunches we had. It's when I discovered that one of the best parts about living in the White House is that when you invite somebody for lunch, they generally come. *[Laughter]*

We're glad you're back. Vice President Cheney is with us. Mr. Vice President, thank you for coming. Secretary of Energy Spence Abraham is with us. He's a Tiger fan, I believe, if I'm not mistaken.

We've got a great Hall—lot of Hall of Famers. One that I work with on a regular basis, of course, is Senator Jim Bunning. Mr. Senator, thank you for being with us today.

I want to thank Jane Forbes Clark, the chairman of the Hall of Fame, appreciate you being here, Jane. Dale Petroskey, thank you for being here, Dale, as well. He is the president of the Hall of Fame.

All the Hall of Famers, we're glad you're here. And thanks for bringing family members too. You're welcome to the people's house.

I appreciate the ESPN Baseball Tonight folks who are here, Joe, Tim, and Peter. That's where I get my news. *[Laughter]* They do a great job of making—bringing baseball into our homes.

My Chief of Staff is here, by the way, Andy Card. He is a long-suffering Red Sox fan. I'm glad you're here. George Will is here as well—long-suffering Cubs fan. But welcome, everybody.

I particularly want to congratulate Paul Molitor and Dennis Eckersley, who will be the newest members of the Hall of Fame. Thank you all for coming. We're honored you're here, and congratulations. And Ozzie Smith and Gary Carter and Eddie Murray took your rightful place amongst some of the

game's greatest players. We welcome you here as well. Thanks for coming, honored you're here, and congratulations.

I can't wait for the baseball season to open. You know, some people, like when they go up to relax, will have the symphony on. I have a baseball game on. I like to do my—prepare for the next day, and my background noise is a baseball game. I'm really looking forward to it. And it's a great way for us to kick off the season here in Washington is have some of the greatest players ever to come and help us kick off baseball.

It's such a wonderful sport. There aren't any time limits, which means you can go and enjoy yourself. It's a great place to go and relax. It's a wonderful place to visit with somebody you love. It's an important part of our history. And we love to herald it here. We love to herald it so much that one of my favorite things to do is to host tee-ball on the South Lawn, so that future Hall of Famers can come and say to one of their classmates, "I love baseball, and I got to play at the White House." *[Laughter]*

One of the traditions, of course, is for the President to throw out the opening pitch for baseball. I'm going to do so for the Cards. I was talking to Phil Niekro coming in. My arm is a little sore. *[Laughter]* I was getting suggestions on how to throw a knuckler. *[Laughter]*

I also know that a former pitcher for the American Legion team in Casper, Wyoming, will also be throwing out an opening day pitch in Cincinnati. That would be your Vice President. He suggested that they not pull out the radar gun. *[Laughter]*

You know, I love the game of baseball. I grew up loving baseball. It's a sport that's passed down from dad to son, in my case—actually, my mother used to keep score for the Yale Bulldogs. I happened to be 1½ years old when she was keeping score for the Yale Bulldogs. So both my parents passed on the love of baseball. I played Little League baseball in Midland, Texas. It's where I peaked. *[Laughter]* I actually played for the Midland Cubs—except, unlike Ernie Banks, I was not known as "Mr. Cub." *[Laughter]* I was known as an all-right catcher.

I think one of the wonderful things about being with Hall of Famers is you set such

high standards for other players, as you've set the stage of excellence. I know there's a lot of players who are getting ready to start the opening season that long to be sitting here in the White House like you are. You've set such a high mark of how to be excellent in a grueling sport, in a sport that requires not only incredible skill but a lot of patience. It's a marathon, not a sprint. And you've set the standard, and we're proud to have the standard-setters here in the greatest house on the face of the Earth, the people's house, the White House.

Thanks for coming. May God bless you and your families, and may God continue to bless our great country. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:25 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to ESPN broadcasters Joe Morgan, Tim Kurkjian, and Peter Gammons; and columnist George Will.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Dinner March 31, 2004

Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. Thank you all. Alex, thank you very much. I didn't realize you were such a good orator. *[Laughter]*

I wasn't Alex's first choice to speak tonight. His request was that Laura come to be the key speaker. Alex is a man of good judgment. So am I, by asking Laura to marry me. She's a fabulous wife and a great First Lady. She sends her love. I think Laura deserves 4 more years as the First Lady.

Laura will be out campaigning with me, and so will Dick Cheney. Our country has had no finer Vice President than Dick Cheney. Mother heard me say that the other day, and she said, "Now, wait a minute." *[Laughter]* No, I'm proud of the Vice President. He's doing a fabulous job.

And I want to thank you all for supporting this ticket, and thanks for coming tonight. This is a huge turnout. Alex said, "Why don't you come by. I may have a few friends here"—*[laughter]*—"a few Greek Americans might show up."

And Manny, thank you as well. I appreciate you and Alex working so hard to make this a spectacular event. I want to thank my

friend Mercer Reynolds, who is the national finance chairman for Bush-Cheney. He's a business guy who has taken time out of his life to help. I thank my friends Jim Langdon and Julie Finley for being the Washington, DC, finance cochairmen. Manny and Alex have helped the DC finance cochairmen meet their goals, for which we are grateful.

I want to thank Congressman Mike Bilirakis from the great State of Florida, for joining us. Congressman Jim Greenwood is with us today, from the great State of Pennsylvania. Thanks for coming, Jim. Jerry Kilgore, the attorney general from Virginia, is with us today. The Lieutenant Governor of the great State of Maryland, Michael Steele, is with us today. I really appreciate you all being here.

I finally got an opponent. The campaign season has arrived. My opponent is an experienced Senator, and he's built up quite a record. In fact, he's been in Washington long enough to take both sides of just about every issue. Senator Kerry voted for the PATRIOT Act. He voted for NAFTA. He voted for No Child Left Behind, and he voted for the use of force in Iraq. Now he opposes the PATRIOT Act, NAFTA, No Child Left Behind, and the liberation of Iraq. He feels strongly about these issues. *[Laughter]* If he could find a third side, I imagine he'd take that one too. *[Laughter]*

It's going to be an interesting campaign. Someone asked Senator Kerry why he had voted against the \$87 billion funding bill to help our troops in Iraq. And here's what he said, "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion before I voted against it." *[Laughter]* Clears things up, doesn't it? *[Laughter]*

The voters this year are going to have a clear, unmistakable choice. It's a choice between the tax relief that is moving this economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. It is a choice between an America that leads the world with confidence and strength or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger. I look forward to this campaign. I look forward to the debate. I look forward to reminding the American people that in the last 3 years, we've accomplished great things. And I look forward—and most importantly, I look forward to laying out a positive vision

for the years ahead, a positive vision for winning the war against terror and extending peace and freedom throughout the world, a positive vision for creating jobs and promoting opportunity and compassion here at home. I will leave no doubt where we stand, and we are going to win on the 2d of November.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges, and we've given serious answers. When we came to office, the stock market was in decline and our economy was headed into recession. We delivered historic tax relief, and now our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation in the world.

We had to confront corporate crimes that cost people their jobs and their savings, so we passed strong corporate reforms, and we made it clear that we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning, so we pursued the terrorist enemy across the world. We've captured or killed many key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them will learn there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, so we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We freed over 50 million people, and once again America is proud to lead the armies of liberation.

When Dick Cheney and I came to Washington, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated, so we gave our military the resources they deserve. And today, no one can question the skill, the strength, and the spirit of the United States military.

It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. A President needs to step up, to make hard decisions, to keep his commitments, to speak clearly, and that is exactly how I will continue to lead our great country.

Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. Security and the prosperity

of America are at stake. The other side hadn't offered much in the ways of strategy to win the war or policies to expand our economy. So far all we hear is old partisan rhetoric and bitterness. Anger and bitterness are not an agenda for the future of America.

I will take on the big issues, set big goals. With optimism, resolve, and determination, we stand ready to lead this Nation for 4 more years.

A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was President, we have left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government would have.

I'm optimistic about our future. I'm optimistic about our economy because I've seen the hard work of the American people. I understand the entrepreneurial spirit of this country. Because of good policies and because of that spirit, our economy is strong, and it is growing stronger. Economic growth in the second half of 2003 was the fastest in nearly 20 years. Manufacturing activity is increasing. Business investment is rising. Disposable income is up. Inflation is low. Interest rates are low. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever in American history. Job creation is gaining strength. We've added over 350,000 new jobs over the last 6 months. The tax relief we passed is working.

My opponent has a different view of tax relief. When we passed an increase in the child credit to help families, he voted against it. When we reduced the marriage penalty, he voted against it. When we created a lower 10-percent rate for working families, he voted against it. When we reduced tax on dividends that many seniors depend upon, he voted against it. When we gave small businesses tax incentives to expand and hire, he voted against them. When we phased out the death tax, he voted against it. We're beginning to see a pattern here. *[Laughter]*

My opponent is one of the main opponents of tax relief in the United States Congress. But when tax increases are proposed, it's a lot easier to get a "yes" vote out of him. Over the years, he's voted over 350 times for higher taxes on the American people, including

the biggest tax increase in American history. He supported higher gas taxes 11 times. He's favored a gas tax increase of 50 cents a gallon. That would cost you another \$5 or more every time you fill up the tank. For that kind of money, at least he ought to offer a free car wash. *[Laughter]*

Senator Kerry is proposing a lot of new Government spending as well—about \$1.7 trillion at last count—and the campaign is just getting started. He says he's going to pay for all this by raising taxes on the rich. To cover all of the spending, Senator Kerry would need to eliminate every single one of the tax reductions we passed as well as more tax increases. The marriage penalty would go back up. The child credit would go down. Taxes on many small businesses would rise. Even low-income people paying the 10-percent rate would see their taxes go up. I guess that's his idea of taxing the rich. It turns out, if you have a job, a child, or a dollar to spare, Senator Kerry thinks you're rich enough to pay more taxes. Fortunately, we're not going to give him that chance.

Higher taxes would undermine growth and destroy jobs, just as our economy is getting stronger. Raising taxes is lousy economic policy. To help grow the American economy and to create more jobs for our workers, I have a better idea. We should make the tax cuts permanent.

We must do more to keep this economy growing and to create jobs. We need to maintain spending discipline in the Nation's Capital. We need to protect small-business owners and employees from frivolous and junk lawsuits. We've laid out a plan to control the cost of health care and get people better access through association health care plans, tax-free health savings accounts. And we need to pass medical liability reform at the Federal level in order to hold down health care costs.

This country must never become isolated from the world. We must reject the pessimistic thoughts of the economic isolationists and knock down trade barriers and open up new markets around the world for our country's farmers and ranchers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers. I proposed a sound energy strategy, one that will modernize our electricity system and one that will make

America less dependent on foreign sources of oil. The Congress needs to pass the energy bill.

You hear a lot of talk about job creation up here, but the other side is against every one of these job-creating measures. Empty talk about jobs and economic isolationism won't get anyone hired. The way to make sure this economy continues to grow is to reelect a pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur President, and that is George W. Bush.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious dangers. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom, and today no friend or enemy doubts the word of the United States of America. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance, and the Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance, and now the dictator sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget, a lesson this Nation must never forget: America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence information, and we saw a threat. Members of Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. The previous administration and Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of this country.

In 2002, the U.N. Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein refused to comply. So I had a choice to make: Either take the word of a madman or defend this country. Given that choice, I will defend America every time. *[Applause]* Thank you all.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the next Iraqi election. *[Laughter]* We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. Because our coalition acted, Saddam's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the very heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free, and because we acted, America is more secure.

We still face thugs and terrorists in Iraq who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the advance of liberty, and there's a reason why. They know that a free Iraq will be a major defeat in the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake our will. America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins. We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq. We will defeat them there so we do not have to face them in our own country.

Other nations are helping. They're helping Iraq become a free society, because they understand what we in America know: The world will be a safer place with a free Iraq. We stand with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These are hard tasks, but they're necessary tasks. America will complete what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world but only if other countries don't object. I'm all for united action, and so are our 34 coalition partners in Iraq right now. Yet, America must never outsource America's national security decisions to the leaders of other countries.

Some are skeptical if the war on terror is really a war at all. My opponent said the war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence-gathering, law enforcement operation. I completely disagree. Our Nation followed this approach

after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. But the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan. They were plotting in other nations. They were drawing up more ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers.

With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. Our men and women in the military are taking great risks, and they're doing great work. At bases across our country and the world, I have had the privilege of meeting with those who defend our country, sacrifice for our security. I've seen their great decency and unselfish courage. And I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong, yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reference and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that give us direction and purpose, our families, our schools, and our religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government.

We stand for the fair treatment of faith-based groups, so they can receive Federal support for the works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for Government discrimination against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and to send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon, exploited, or cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench or

judges who try to remake the values of America by court order.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. We're changing the culture of this country from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands, we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you are fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in this new responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This is not one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high, the challenges are difficult, and the choices are clear. We live in a time when resolve is needed. None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began.

On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I'll never forget that day. Workers in hardhats were shouting, "Whatever it takes." A guy pointed at me and said, "Don't let me down." As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

In these times, I've also been a witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, our capacity to meet serious challenges, or our willingness to serve a cause greater than self-interest. But Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've

seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We will need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win, and the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every part of this country. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it, and we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you. Thank you for coming. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:30 p.m. at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Alex G. Spanos and Manuel N. Stamatakis, event co-chairmen, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks on Signing the Unborn Victims of Violence Act of 2004

April 1, 2004

Thank you for coming. Thank you all. Please be seated. Thanks for the warm welcome. [*Laughter*] Welcome to the people's house, the White House. I'm pleased that you all could be here for the first bill signing ceremony of the year 2004.

The Unborn Victims of Violence Act provides that, under Federal law, any person who causes death or injury to a child in the womb shall be charged with a separate offense, in addition to any charges relating to the mother. As of today, the law of our Nation will acknowledge the plain fact that crimes of violence against a pregnant woman often have two victims. And therefore, in those cases, there are two offenses to be punished. Under this law, those who direct violence toward a pregnant woman will answer for the full extent of the harm they have done and for all the crimes they have committed.

I appreciate Members of the United States Congress who have joined us today. Majority Leader Bill Frist is with us from the Senate. Thank you for coming. Majority Leader Tom DeLay of the House of Representatives, Members from both political parties have joined us. I appreciate the Members on stage

here. House bill sponsor Congresswoman Melissa Hart from Pennsylvania is with us. Senate sponsor Senator Mike DeWine from Ohio is with us. And the chairmen of the Judiciary Committees, Senator Orrin Hatch and Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner, are with us as well. Thank you all. I appreciate those in attendance today from across the country who have worked hard to get this bill passed.

I also want to thank Sharon Rocha and her husband, Ron Grantski, for joining us today. This act of Congress addresses tragic losses such as Sharon and Ron have known. They have laid to rest their daughter Laci, a beautiful young woman who was joyfully awaiting the arrival of a new son. They have also laid to rest that child, a boy named Conner, who was waiting to be born when his life too was taken. His little soul never saw light, but he was loved, and he is remembered. And his name is forever joined with that of his mom in this statute, which is also known as Laci and Conner's law. All who knew Laci Peterson have mourned two deaths, and the law cannot look away and pretend there was just one.

Each of these families on this stage has lost a child or a grandchild or both. Carol and Buford Lyons, Tracy Marciniak-Seavers, Stephanie Alberts, Cynthia Warner, I thank you all for your courage for coming today.

As these and the other families understand, any time an expectant mother is a victim of violence, two lives are in the balance, each deserving protection and each deserving justice. If the crime is murder and the unborn child's life ends, justice demands a full accounting under the law.

Until today, the Federal Criminal Code had been silent on the injury or death of a child in cases of violence against a pregnant woman. This omission in the law has led to clear injustices. The death of an innocent unborn child has too often been treated as a detail in one crime but not a crime in itself. Police and prosecutors had been to crime scenes and have shared the grief of families but have so often been unable to seek justice for the full offense. The American people as well have learned of these cases, and they urged action. The swift bipartisan passage of this bill through Congress this year indicates

a strong consensus that the suffering of two victims can never equal only one offense.

The moral concern of humanity extends to those unborn children who are harmed or killed in crimes against their mothers. And now, the protection of Federal law extends to those children as well. With this action, we widen the circle of compassion and inclusion in our society, and we reaffirm that the United States of America is building a culture of life.

It is now my honor to sign the Unborn Victims of Violence Act of 2004.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:57 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. H.R. 1997, approved April 1, was assigned Public Law No. 108-212.

Remarks at a National Republican Congressional Committee Dinner *April 1, 2004*

Thank you all very much. Thanks for the warm welcome. Whew! *[Laughter]* Go ahead and have a seat. Thank you. I am honored you all are here. I appreciate such a warm welcome. It's good to be with so many friends from the NRCC. By ensuring that we have a Republican majority in the House, you're helping our confident and hopeful agenda; that's what you're doing. You've had great success in the last couple of years. And all of us who represent the people are grateful for your hard work.

As a former House candidate—*[laughter]*—I have tremendous respect for anybody who runs for the Congress. My campaign back in 1978 in the 19th Congressional District didn't turn out the way I hoped. As a matter of fact, walking in here, I saw the guy who beat me. *[Laughter]* There he is. *[Laughter]* I had a great time, though. It was really an interesting campaign. I was campaigning right after Laura and I got married, so it was like an extended honeymoon. *[Laughter]* We learned a lot about each other as we drove across west Texas. Laura likes to say I even convinced her to vote for me. *[Laughter]* Unfortunately, I didn't convince enough people. *[Laughter]* I put my political career on hold for about 15 years, but I like to think things worked out all right.

This year, I'm looking forward to campaigning with a man who did win in his race for the Congress in 1978 and five times after that. Dick Cheney was a fine United States Congressman from Wyoming. He was by far the best Congressman from Wyoming. *[Laughter]* Dick Cheney is the finest Vice President our Nation has ever had, and I'm proud to have him on the ticket with me. When Dick came to Congress, the House held 277 Democrats and only 158 Republicans. Things are a lot different today, and the country is better off for it.

Thanks to your generosity and hard work, we have a strong Republican majority. And with your help, we intend to increase the Republican majority in 2004. Mr. Speaker, I can't tell you what a joy it is to work with you. Denny Hastert is solid as a rock. He's a man of his word. He's a kind and decent person. He's a man of enormous accomplishment. Denny Hastert needs to remain the Speaker of the House of Representatives for the good of the country.

I wasn't Denny's first choice to speak here; Laura was. *[Laughter]* Mr. Speaker, she sends her love to you and to all our friends out here. By the way, Laura is a fabulous First Lady for our country.

I appreciate Congressman Tom Reynolds, the chairman of the NRCC. Thank you, Tommy, for your good work. The chairman of the spring dinner is Congressman Jerry Lewis from California. Jerry, you did a fabulous job. Thank you, sir.

I'm proud of the job my fellow Texan is doing as the majority leader of the House of Representatives, Tom DeLay. He's a great majority leader. We enjoy working with the whip, Roy Blunt from Missouri, who is doing a good job of counting those votes.

I see the conference chair is with us tonight, Congresswoman Deborah Pryce from Ohio. Thank you for coming. The vice chair, Jack Kingston from Georgia, is with us tonight. Jack, thank you. The conference secretary, Congressman John Doolittle from California; Congressman Chris Cox, the policy chair from California, is with us as well. Thank you, Chris.

And finally, the only other Congressman I'm going to mention tonight is my friend

from Texas. He's about as fine a Congressman as you'll find. I'm proud to call him friend, and that's Congressman Ralph Hall.

I appreciate Angela Pregano-Knight for sharing her talents tonight, singing the national anthem. What a beautiful person, and with a great voice. And finally, Timmy Kelly is here with us. And Timmy, thanks for singing "God Bless America," and I'm glad you're here. Thanks for bringing your mom and dad with you as well.

I finally got an opponent. *[Laughter]* He's an experienced Senator. He's built up quite a record. He's been here in Washington so long, he's taken both sides of just about every issue. *[Laughter]* Senator Kerry voted for the PATRIOT Act, for NAFTA, for the No Child Left Behind Act, and for the use of force in Iraq. Now he opposes the PATRIOT Act, NAFTA, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the liberation of Iraq. He's been on both sides of many big issues. If he could find a third side, I'd imagine he'd take that one too. *[Laughter]* Someone asked my opponent why he had voted against the \$87 billion funding bill to help our troops in Iraq. Here's what he said: "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, before I voted against it." *[Laughter]* End of quote. *[Laughter]* Sure clears things up, doesn't it? *[Laughter]*

What is going to be clear is that the voters have a clear choice this year. It's a choice between keeping the tax relief that the Congress passed, tax relief that is moving this economy forward, or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. It is a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger. And I look forward to making these choices clear to the American people.

I'm ready for this campaign. I'll remind the people that working with the United States Congress, under Speaker Hastert's leadership, we've achieved great things in the past 3 years. I'll also remind them that we have a positive vision, a hopeful vision, an optimistic vision for the years ahead; a positive vision for winning the war on terror and extending peace and freedom throughout the world; a positive vision for creating jobs and promoting opportunity and compassion here at home. We will leave no doubt where we

stand, and we will win on November the 2d of this year.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges, and working with the Congress, we've given serious answers.

When we came to office, the stock market was in decline and the economy was headed into a recession. But we acted. We worked together. We delivered historic tax relief, and now our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation in the world.

We had to confront corporate crimes that cost people their jobs and their savings, so we worked with the United States Congress and passed strong corporate reforms and made it clear that we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning, so we pursued the terrorist enemy across the world. We've captured or killed many key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest will learn there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

Working with the Congress, we confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. So we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We freed over 50 million people, and once again America is proud to lead the armies of liberation.

When the Vice President and I came to Washington, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated, so we worked with this Congress and this leadership to give our military the resources and respect they deserve. And today, no one can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

It is the President's job to confront problems, not pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. A President needs to step up and make the hard decisions and keep his commitments, and that is how I will continue to lead our great country.

Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office and the man who is the Speaker of the House will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. Security and the prosperity of America are at stake. The other side hasn't offered much in the way of strategies to win the war or policies to expand our economy.

So far, all we hear is partisan anger, loud words. Anger is not an agenda for the future of America. We'll take on the big issues with optimism and resolve and determination, and we will make it clear that we stand ready to lead this Nation for 4 more years.

A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. Because of the leadership of Denny Hastert and Members of the United States Congress, we passed the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was the President. We have left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping create new jobs, American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government would have.

Oh, I hear some pessimists around our country, but I'm optimistic about our economy. I'm optimistic because we've put good policies in place, and I'm optimistic because the entrepreneurial spirit is strong and we've got the best workers in the world. Economic growth in the second half of 2003 was the fastest in nearly 20 years. Manufacturing activity is increasing. Business investment is rising. Disposable income is rising. Inflation is low. Mortgage rates are low. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. Job creation is gaining strength. We've added over 350,000 new jobs over the last 6 months. The tax relief we passed is working.

My opponent has a different view of tax relief. When we passed an increase in the child credit to help families, he voted against it. When we reduced the marriage penalty, he voted against it. When we created a lower 10-percent bracket for working families, he voted against it. When we reduced the tax rate on dividends that many seniors depend on, my opponent voted against it. When we gave small businesses a tax incentive to expand and to hire new people, he voted against it. When we passed a phaseout of the death tax, he voted no. We're beginning to see a pattern here. *[Laughter]*

Senator Kerry is one of the main opponents of tax relief in the United States Congress. But when tax increases are proposed, it's a lot easier to get a yes vote out of him. Over the years, he's voted over 350 times for higher taxes on the American people, including the biggest tax increase in American history. He supported higher gas taxes 11

times. He favored a tax increase of 50 cents a gallon. That would cost you another \$5 or more every time you fill up the tank. For that kind of money, he at least ought to throw in a car wash. *[Laughter]*

My opponent is proposing a lot of new Government spending, about \$1.7 trillion at last count, and the campaign is just beginning. He says he's going to pay for all this by raising the taxes on rich people, but he's got a problem. To cover all the new spending, he would need to eliminate every single one of the tax reductions we have passed. To pay for all his new promises, he'd still have to raise taxes on top of that. The marriage penalty would go back up. The child credit would go back up. Taxes on small businesses would rise. Even low-income people paying at the 10-percent rate would see their taxes go up. It turns out, if you have a job, a child, or a dollar to spare, Senator Kerry thinks you're rich enough to pay taxes. Fortunately, he's not going to have that chance.

Higher taxes would undermine growth and destroy jobs, just as this economy is getting stronger. To help grow the American economy and to create more jobs for our citizens, I have a better idea. We should make the tax cuts permanent.

We must do more to keep this economy growing and to create more jobs. I'm working hard with the Congress to maintain spending discipline in Washington, DC.

I have a plan to protect small-business owners and employees from the frivolous lawsuits that make it hard to create new jobs. The House of Representatives has passed good tort reform legislation, thanks to the leadership of Speaker Denny Hastert. Q02

I'm working with the leadership on a plan to control the cost of health care and to get people better access through association health care plans and tax-free health savings accounts. And the Senate needs to follow the lead of the House and pass medical liability reform. Q02

We need to knock down trade barriers and open up new markets around the world for this country's farmers and ranchers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers.

And we need a sound energy strategy. We need an energy plan to modernize our electricity system and make this country less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

On every one of these measures, the working people have got an ally in the leadership in the Republican Congress.

You know, my opponent talks about job creation, but he's against every one of these job-creating measures. Empty talk about jobs and economic isolationism will not get anyone hired. The best way to create jobs is to reelect a pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur President and United States Congress.

Our future in the world also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious dangers. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom. Today, no friend or enemy doubts the word of the United States. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance, and the Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance, and now the dictator sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget. It's a lesson the Congress must never forget. It's a lesson this country must never forget. America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence information, and we saw a threat. The Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. The previous administration and Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our country.

In 2002, the United Nations Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein

refused to comply, so we had a choice to make: Either take the word of a madman, or take action to defend America. Faced with that choice, I will defend America every time.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat; he just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the next Iraqi election. *[Laughter]* We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. Because our coalition acted, Saddam's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the very heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free. Because we acted, America is more secure.

We still face thugs and terrorists in Iraq who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the advance of liberty. And there's a reason why. They know that a free Iraq will be a major defeat for the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake the will of the United States. America will never be intimidated by a bunch of thugs and assassins. We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq. We will defeat them there so we do not have to face them in our own country.

Other nations are helping Iraq to build a free society, because they know what we know: A free Iraq will make the whole world more secure. We stand with the Iraqi people, the brave Iraqi people, as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These are not easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. We will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world, but only if other countries do not object. I'm all for united action, and so are our 34 coalition partners in Iraq right now. Yet, America must never outsource America's national security decisions to the leaders of other countries.

Some are skeptical that the war on terror is really a war at all. Senator Kerry said the

war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence-gathering, law enforcement operation. I disagree. Our Nation followed this approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. But the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan. They were still plotting in other nations. They were drawing up more ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

Our men and women in the military are taking great risks and doing a great job. At bases across our country and the world, I've had the privilege of meeting with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I've seen their great decency and unselfish courage. I can assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong, yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose, our families, our schools, our religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government.

We stand for fair treatment of faith-based groups, so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for Government discrimination against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and to send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon, to be exploited, or to be cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law.

We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench or judges who try to remake the values of America by court order.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. The culture of this country is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you are fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. These are not one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high, the challenges are difficult, when resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I will never forget that day. Workers in hardhats were shouting, "Whatever it takes." One guy pointed at me and said, "Don't let me down." As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes. *[Applause]* Thank you all.

In these times, I've also been a witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, our capacity to meet a serious challenge, or our willingness to serve a cause greater than self-interest. But Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've

seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We will need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win, and the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity and hope through every corner of this country. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:08 p.m. at the Washington Hilton.

Remarks in a Discussion on Job Training in Huntington, West Virginia

April 2, 2004

The President. Thanks for coming. Please be seated. I wish Dan had said "a friend of long standing"—[laughter]—as opposed to "an old friend." I knew him when he lived in Texas. You've got a good one running Marshall University here. He's a fine fellow. He's doing a fine job.

I'm proud to be back in Huntington. We're going to have an interesting discussion today about how to make sure people have an opportunity to get the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century. That's really what we're here to talk about. We're going to talk about how to make sure everybody's life is optimistic and hopeful as this economy of ours grows and changes. A perfect place to do so here is at this community college, and I'm so honored to have been invited. Thank you for opening up your fantastic facility, and thank you for giving me a chance to come and talk.

By the way, right as I walked in—I want to thank the sisters. One of them said to me—probably the most important thing a President can hear is, she said, "Mr. President, I'm praying for you." Thank you.

I want to thank the State and local officials who are here. Thanks for coming by to say hello. I think that when you finish hearing this discussion, you're going to realize what

an important asset you have in the community college system of West Virginia and how the Federal Government and employers can work together with the community colleges to make sure people get the skills necessary to take advantage of an expanding job base.

I met a lady coming in named Robin Black. She was out there at the airport. The reason I mention Robin is, a lot of times people say the strength of America is our military. And that's a part of our strength, and by the way, it is strong, and we intend to keep it strong. Or they say the strength of America is the fact that we're a wealthy nation. And that's important as well. But the true strength of the Nation is the hearts and souls of our citizens. That's the true strength of America. And the reason I mention Robin Black is that she's a volunteer. Robin's sitting right there, by the way. She's a volunteer to help people going for a job interview to look as good as they possibly can, to understand what to say. She's a mentor to people who need help.

No, the strength of this country is the fact that we've got citizens from all walks of life who are willing to love a neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves, who are willing to work to change America one heart and one soul at a time. If you're one of those soldiers in the army of compassion, I thank you for doing what you're doing. You're making a difference to our country—just like you are, Robin. Thank you.

I'm an optimist, because I fully understand America's strengths and I've seen what we've come through. I want to remind you right quick what has happened to this country, what our economy has been through, what the America people have had to endure over the last 3 years.

We went through a recession. That means things were going backwards. That means three quarters of negative growth. Now, if you're a small-business owner, it's difficult to survive in a recession. If you're somebody looking for a job, it's hard to find a job during a recession. But we acted, and we cut the taxes on the people, which made the recession one of the shallowest recessions in economic history.

And then as we were recovering from the recession, the enemy hit us. They attacked us, and it affected us. It affected our way

of thinking, for starters. See, when most of us were growing up, we thought oceans could protect us, and we found out that wasn't the case. We found out that America could be harmed by people who hate what we stand for. We suffered for those who lost life. I vowed then and there that the best way to protect America was to get on the offense and stay on the offense and bring people to justice. We resolved as a nation not to allow terrorists to cause us to lose our optimism and our spirit. That's what we resolved. And we still have that spirit and resolve, by the way.

And then we found out we had some corporate citizens who didn't tell the truth. That affected our economy. It kind of shattered our idealism about people in positions of responsibility. We passed tough laws, by the way. We're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America. There will be consequences if you lie to your shareholders and your employees. But it affected us. It was a hurdle we had to cross. It was a challenge to our economy.

And then, as you know, I made the decision to remove Saddam Hussein from power. Let me tell you one of the important lessons of September the 11th, and it's important for people to understand, is that when we see a threat, we cannot let it materialize. That's an important lesson. I saw a threat. I looked at intelligence and saw a threat. The United States Congress looked at the same intelligence, and it saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. People were worried about Saddam Hussein because of his past behavior. Remember, he had used weapons of mass destruction against his neighbors and his own people. I remembered the lesson of September the 11th as I looked at the data. I had a choice, either to trust a madman or defend the country. Given that choice, I'll defend America every time.

We've still got hard work in Iraq. The reason we do is, there's killers there who want to shake our will. They want the American people to forget what it means to promote freedom. They want us to retreat. See, a free Iraq is an historic opportunity. A free Iraq will change a neighborhood that needs to be free. A free Iraq will make the world more

peaceful. But a free Iraq is something that the terrorists fear. They hate freedom. They can't stand the thought of a free society, so they're willing to kill. And they're trying to shake our will, but they don't understand this country. We will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins. This country will stay the course and get the job done. We will get the job done.

Laura reminded me one time, she said, "Do you remember what it was like in the summer of 2002 when you turned on your TV sets and saw 'March to War'?" That's a hurdle that we had to overcome. You see, it's not good for the economy to be marching to war. It's good for our security, but it's hard for people to make investment decisions if you think you're marching to war. It's a negative thought. So that was the fourth challenge we faced here in America.

We faced a recession, an attack, corporate scandals, and a march to war to make us more secure. But we've overcome all those challenges, because the entrepreneurial spirit is strong, because the America people are great workers, and because of good policy.

One of the things I think really did help, and I look forward to continuing this dialog on the subject, is, you see, when a person has more money in their pocket, they're more likely to demand an additional good or a service. And when they demand additional good or a service, somebody's likely to provide the good or a service. And when somebody provides a good or a service, somebody is more likely to keep a job or find work.

The tax relief we passed is working. It's making a difference for this economy. And the reason I say that is, for example, the homeownership rate is the highest ever. That's really important. We want people owning their own home. It's a vital part of our economy.

Small businesses—the spirit of the small-business owner is strong in America. Remember, when you cut income-tax rates on individuals, you're really affecting most small businesses in America, because most small businesses are sole proprietorships or Subchapter S corporations, which means they pay tax at the individual income-tax rate. And in that most new jobs are created by small businesses, it makes sense to have a vibrant

small-business sector in America. And the small-business sector of this country is strong, and it's growing, and people are more optimistic about expanding their businesses.

Manufacturing is up. An important statistic besides the growth statistics is the fact that after-tax income is up by 10 percent since late 2000. That's good. If you've got more money in your pocket, that's a good thing.

The economy is growing, and people are finding work. Today the statistics show that we added 308,000 jobs for the month of March. We've added 759,000 jobs since August. This economy is strong; it is getting stronger. You can understand why I'm optimistic when I cite these statistics because I remember what we have been through. I mean, we're getting better, and that's important.

There are other things we need to do. We need to make sure the tax cuts are permanent. Congress doesn't need to be taking away the child credit or the marriage penalty or the 10-percent—or the reduction—or the increase of those eligible for the 10-percent bracket. We need to make these tax cuts permanent. Small-business owners need to have certainty in the Tax Code if they're going to be confident about expanding their businesses.

We need tort reform in America, if you're a small-business owner. If we want our jobs to stay here in America and want people to be able to find work, we better make sure the legal environment is fair and balanced. Frivolous lawsuits hurt small-business owners. They make it hard for people to expand their business.

We need less regulation. I wish I could tell you that every single piece of paper you fill out is read at the Federal level. *[Laughter]* I can't. *[Laughter]* If I were to say it is true, a lot of people would walk right out of the hall. *[Laughter]*

We need to make sure that we've got good policies to help control the cost of health care: medical savings accounts; association health care plans; and real, substantial medical liability reform at the Federal level.

West Virginia's unemployment rate is 5.4 percent, down from 6.4 percent a year ago. The policies are working. There's more we need to do. There's more we need to do to

make sure the job base here is strong and people can find good jobs right here in America. We need an energy policy that makes sense.

If you're a small manufacturing company—or big, for that matter—manufacturing company, and you're worried about where you're going to get your electricity from, it's hard to expand your business. It's hard to expand your business if you're worried about the reliability of electricity, not just the cost but whether or not electricity is going to be reliable. Our electricity system is antiquated. It wasn't all that long ago, last summer, to be exact, that we started having rolling blackouts. That affects the ability for people to find a job when that happens.

We've got a great, abundant resource in coal, and we need to—*[applause]*. I came to West Virginia a while ago when I was seeking the vote. I said, "We're going to have a robust, clean coal technology program funded by the Federal Government." My budget for this year has got \$447 million in it for clean coal technology. This Nation must be willing to use—we must be willing to use the resources we have in a smart way. We put out good regulations for mining companies to make sure we don't shut down the ability to find coal and, by the way, to hurt people finding work. In other words, we've been responsible, and the most responsible position is to make us less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

The job base is expanding. We've got a good strategy to keep expanding. But you've got to remember that as the economy changes, people need to change with it. Their skill levels need to change. And one of the big challenges we have is how to make sure we match people who want to work with the jobs which are available, and that's what we're going to discuss today.

This is—as I say, this is a time of transition. That's what the economists say. That's okay to use that word. The problem is, if you're one of the people that are worried about the transition, we need to make sure there's a plan to help you. That's what we need to do. We need to stand with people who want to work and help them gain the skills necessary so that they can do what they want to do, which is to put food on the table for

their families, to do their jobs as a responsible adult.

By the way, all job training starts with making sure we get it right at the elementary and secondary school level. The No Child Left Behind Act is really important. It's an important part of making sure that people can read and write and add and subtract. And we're going to stay on it by insisting that in return for Federal money, that we achieve high standards. See, I believe every child can learn, and I'm against these systems that just move these kids through and hope that they learn. We've got a—we'll say, "Show us whether or not a child is learning to read and write and add and subtract early in life." And if not, there will be the help necessary to make sure not one single child gets left behind. If you talk to the educators, they'll tell you, if we can get it right at the elementary and secondary school level, we'll be able to get it right at higher education as well.

Now, the other thing we need to do is recognize that some kids have been shuffled through and they need remedial help at the high school level. And we've laid out a good strategy to deal with that.

But I think one of the most exciting strategies is the one I started to detail in the State of the Union and will continue talking about next week, which is to make sure the WIA Program, the Workforce Investment Act, gets money into the classrooms, gets money to the people so that they can get properly trained for the jobs which exist.

The community college system is an incredibly important part of the education system in America because the curriculum are flexible. That means that if an employer group says, "We need these kind of people," that they're willing to adapt a curriculum to help train people for the jobs which exist. Vicki Riley is going to tell us what that means here in a second.

It's important for us to make sure there's collaboration, for example, for high-tech industries, so people get the skills. Listen, technology is changing, and it races through our economy, but work skills don't change as quickly. And that's the challenge we face. We've got to make sure we get people trained, and that's what we're here to talk about.

I want people out there listening to listen to the story of some of the people who have gone back to school, to realize that that option is available for you. If you're worried about the job you're in and you feel like you need a new skillset in order to meet the new jobs, there's some opportunity for you. There's Pell grants available. There's scholarship money available. Now, Government can't make you make up your mind to seek new skills, but we darn sure can help, and that's what we're here to talk about today.

And a perfect person to start the conversation is Vicki Riley. She's the provost and CEO of Marshall Community College. She has put in some very innovative programs. And Vicki, thank you for giving me a chance to visit this beautiful campus.

[Vicki Riley made brief remarks.]

The President. I think what Vicki is saying is, is that there are some fields that are begging for—looking for workers, best way to put it. The health care field is such a field. I mean, I have traveled this country quite extensively, and a lot of times I hear that, "Gosh, if we only had more skilled nurses, or if we only had more skilled technicians, we could meet the demands, our needs." And what Vicki is saying is, the community college here has got a curriculum developed to meet the needs of the health industry here in West Virginia. And I presume part of the curriculum was developed by the people doing the hiring.

Ms. Riley. Absolutely. One of the things, again, that is a strength of community college is we're connected. We're connected to business and industry. And those employers sit on our advisory boards, and they tell us what needs to be current. They tell us what they need. They tell us what we may be missing, and we go back and fix it, so that they're getting the types of employees they want to hire that next go-round.

The President. Yes, you see, that's an interesting concept, isn't it, and it's something people have got to understand, that Vicki goes out and says, "Who are you looking for? What kind of skills do you need? What can we do to adapt our curriculum to your needs?" And that's very important. It's that

flexibility which I think makes the community college system such a vibrant part of the American experience.

That's why I've asked Congress to put up an additional \$250 million for collaborative efforts between the community college and the local employer groups, so people can find the skills. I mean, after all, it makes sense for Government to help people help themselves. And that's what we're talking about here.

The other thing we can do to make sure Vicki's job is better is to make sure the paperwork requirements from the Federal Government are more streamlined. I mean, they've got all kinds of programs coming out of—am I right? *[Applause]*

We have got a student with us named Rina Angus. Now, Rina, first of all, what were you doing before you became a student?

Rina Angus. I was in administrative management at a local health club in Huntington. And whenever the facility was coming under new ownership, I decided that that was my time to leave.

The President. So you made the decision, right?

Ms. Angus. I made a decision.

The President. That's good. *[Laughter]* You're a mom?

Ms. Angus. Yes, sir.

The President. Two children?

Ms. Angus. Yes, sir.

The President. How old?

Ms. Angus. Eleven and thirteen.

The President. Whew, yeah, I've been there. *[Laughter]* You have a job, you decide to leave because of the change in the business, and then what happens?

Ms. Angus. My husband got laid off.

The President. Yes? Then what happens? So far it's not a very pretty story.

Ms. Angus. Well, we prayed a lot, and we found out through the Parkersburg Job Service that there was additional training available, that we qualified for a program called the Displaced Worker Program. And when we went for the initial training and interviews, it just happened that my husband lucked into another job and I qualified for the program. So they showed me a list of skills that were needed in the area, the in-demand jobs, and I saw one on there that

I had thought about when I was in high school and decided to pursue it.

The President. And what is it?

Ms. Angus. Radiologic technology in the allied health field here at Marshall.

The President. Fantastic. Catch the story. Listen to the story. I mean, I think it's a wonderful story about a mom and wife who, instead of getting, like, totally distraught with the circumstances, says, "I'm going to go back to school." And there's help for that. The Displaced Worker Program is part of the Federal monies that are available to help people go back to the community college system.

So, was it easy to go back to community college? Was it hard to go back to school?

Ms. Angus. Well, it was scary to go back after being out of school for 18 years. But with the help of Steve Brown, with the adult recruitment office here at Marshall—he made the transition very smooth. He told me the classes I needed to get into. He helped me sign up for them. He directed me where I needed to go. The staff at Marshall is wonderful. I mean, if you have situations arise with your children or an illness, they work with you to let you get your job done.

The President. Good. Do you think you're going to make more in your new job after having come here, or not? That's a loaded question. *[Laughter]*

Ms. Angus. Yes. I mean, the statistics show that I should double the salary that I was making before.

The President. Yes. Let me pick up on that. That's why the kind of leading question, as we say, and I'm not even a lawyer. *[Laughter]* It's important for people who are listening to realize that if you go back to the community college and gain new skills for the jobs which exist, not only can you become employable, you're likely to make more money.

I was at Mesa Community College and met a woman who had been a graphic design artist for 15 years. She decided to go back to school in a technological program, got out—the Government helped her—got out, and she made more in her first year in her new job because of the skills she had gained than she'd made in her 15th year as a graphic design artist.

You hear a lot of talk about becoming—productivity. That’s kind of the talk of the economists these days. That means that one worker can produce more units now than they could have before. But productivity also means having the skills necessary to work in the new jobs. And if you’re more productive, if the society is more productive, wealth goes up. And in this case, when Rina gets more productive, her personal wealth will go up.

Now, are you almost through?

Ms. Angus. I’m completing my first year here at Marshall, the basic skills program. And I’m currently awaiting an interview at Saint Mary’s School of Radiology, where, if I’m accepted, I would start this summer and complete 2 years of clinical and classroom training. And at that time, you take a board certification to become a certified radiologist—

The President. Do you need a recommendation? [*Laughter*]

Ms. Angus. Well, if you’re willing to give one.

The President. Okay, you got one.

Ms. Angus. Thank you very much, sir.

The President. Thanks. Great job.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. Rocky McCoy is with us. Rocky, tell us what you do. He’s got a very interesting job and a great opportunity to help people.

[*Rocky McCoy, site coordinator, Huntington Work4WV Career Center, and manager, Huntington Job Service, made brief remarks.*]

The President. That’s good. Now, tell me about your board. Do you have employers on your board?

Mr. McCoy. Yes, we do. Yes, we do.

The President. Like, how many? [*Laughter*] Well, not exactly.

Mr. McCoy. Our board is made up of—it’s a pretty large board. There’s probably 50-plus, and we’re required to have 51 percent of the membership from the private sector.

The President. Right, that’s good.

Mr. McCoy. So we have—we have several employers that are on our board.

The President. How many people do you see, would you say?

Mr. McCoy. In the Huntington office, I’d say we see anywhere from 400 to 600 people come through our door a month for one-stop services. It’s not necessarily job service; that is for all one-stop services and all of our partners within our one-stop system.

The President. Right. What else could people do at the one-stop?

Mr. McCoy. We have the job service, if someone’s looking for a job. We can go through the necessary paperwork, so to speak, to find out what a person’s skills are, and we can refer them out to jobs that are available. We also have the veterans program so—

The President. Right.

Mr. McCoy. —if we have any veterans that need special programs for veterans, they can talk to a veterans officer there. People with disabilities—we also have the Department of Rehabilitative Services there; the Department of Health and Human Resources, if people need some support until they find a job; senior employment programs; adult basic education, if a person needs to work on their GED; and also the basic skills program, such as remediation, job-seeking skills, interviewing skills, how to fill out a resume and job application.

The President. See, these services, by the way, used to be scattered all over. And now he calls it one-stop because you go to one place, and I appreciate that. Who’s hiring?

Mr. McCoy. Folks in the health industry, folks in the IT industry, and there are several smaller businesses that are hiring in the area.

The President. That’s good. See, there are jobs. And a lot of people say, “I hear there’s jobs available, but I don’t have the skills, so I’m not going to go look.” And Rocky’s job and, truth of the matter, all our jobs, is to say, “Here’s someone available to help you.” And you’ve got to want to help yourself, like this good lady did. You got to say, “I want to embetter myself. I want to take advantage of the opportunity.” But Rocky’s job is to help steer people to the opportunities, whether it be the community college or the jobs which exist, if people don’t feel like they need to enhance their skills.

And I appreciate you, Rock. I call you Rock.

Mr. McCoy. That's fine. *[Laughter]* You can call me whatever you want. *[Laughter]*

The President. All right, Sally Oxley is with us. Sally is a small-business owner. I love to be with entrepreneurs, people who are willing to start their own business and dream big dreams, people who—and as a result, by the way, of dreaming a dream, gets in a position, when successful, to hire people. That's one of the dividends of the entrepreneurial spirit, is people can find work.

Sally, tell us about your business. How did you get started? Why did you start your own business? How did you find the courage to start your business? And anything else you want to say.

[Sally Oxley, owner, Huntington Physical Therapy, made brief remarks.]

The President. By the way, that's not easy. It sounds easy; it's hard. It requires a good plan, a good strategy, and the development of a product people need.

Ms. Oxley. And the reason that I started my own business was, I wanted to do it my way. I wanted to do it the right way. And that seemed to be what evolved.

The President. Good. And are you looking for people?

Ms. Oxley. We are. We're always looking for good people.

[Ms. Oxley made further remarks.]

The President. And how is your business doing?

Ms. Oxley. It's growing. We're doing well.

The President. A lot of old guys like me with kind of aches and pains. *[Laughter]*

Ms. Oxley. A few. Birth to death, is what we say.

The President. I like that beginning part. *[Laughter]*

[Ms. Oxley made further remarks.]

The President. I'm glad you're doing well. Thanks for starting your own business. Thanks for putting people to work. I think it's a very interesting story, isn't it, that a small business in the health field connects with the community college in order to do two things, one, lay out the requirements necessary to hire people, but also provide a opportunity for on-the-job training.

I appreciate your contribution to the community. It's a great story.

Ms. Oxley. It's a great community.

The President. It is a great community. Thanks for coming.

Bryan Johnson.

Mr. Johnson. Yes, sir.

The President. I'm glad you're here.

Mr. Johnson. Glad to be here, sir.

The President. They ever call you "Red"? *[Laughter]*

Mr. Johnson. On several occasions. I haven't figured out why just yet. *[Laughter]*

The President. I'll be the funny guy. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Johnson. If we're going to do the act then, sir, I'll sit over there on your lap—

The President. That's right. *[Laughter]* Whew! Anyway, Bryan, changing subjects rapidly—*[laughter]*—no longer verbally dueling with Bryan. *[Laughter]* He is the chief information officer of Mountain State Center for Independent Living. Tell us your story, please sir.

[Mr. Johnson made brief remarks.]

The President. What did you get? What degree did you get here at Marshall?

Mr. Johnson. I got the IT degree. And they actually offer—

The President. Explain what IT means, just in case somebody—

Mr. Johnson. Yes, information technology, which basically covers computers and networking and whatnot.

The President. Now, that sounds like a pretty big leap, from a guy in a restaurant business to the IT business. Was it a big leap?

Mr. Johnson. You better believe it. When I started in 1998 into the program, I couldn't even tell you how to turn a computer on, okay? Now I'm a network engineer.

The President. That's good.

Mr. Johnson. Thank you. Thank you.

The President. By the way, did you have to pay for the—how did you handle the cost?

Mr. Johnson. I got student loans, and I also received some assistance through WIA as well.

The President. Right, Workforce Investment Act. A lot of times, with Government things, we talk in initials.

[Mr. Johnson made further remarks.]

The President. And so what is your—with the degree you have, not only do you provide a—you're an important employee for the firm for which you work, you're also now a consultant.

[Mr. Johnson made further remarks.]

The President. Are you making more money now than in the restaurant business?

Mr. Johnson. Oh, yes.

The President. That's really important for people to understand, that if you come back to Marshall Community College, for example, and get new skills—how long did it take you to get them?

Mr. Johnson. Well, sir, it actually took me 4 years with this program, because there are four specializations on the degree, and I went for all four because of portability. I wanted to be able to go anywhere and do anything.

The President. So you went for the full monty.

Mr. Johnson. Oh, yes. Indeed. [Laughter]

The President. Most programs don't take 4 years, I don't think.

[The discussion continued.]

The President. It's very important for people to understand that, one, the job base is growing in different sectors. You know, I know workers are worried that—you know, "I wish my son or my daughter could have worked in the same industry I've worked in for all my life." But this is a changing economy. It's a different economy. It's an economy that provides great opportunity. However, people are going to have to seize the moment, and that's what we're here discussing. We're discussing this sense of providing—so that people can provide for their families.

And there's two great examples here of people that could have decided, "Well, I don't think I'm going to improve myself," and just stayed doing what they were doing. But instead, I sense a great deal of excitement in their voices about having made a decision that was an important decision, a decision that probably seemed pretty darn hard at first. But now that you've made it and you're in the middle of it, you can recommend it, I suspect.

I love being with an entrepreneur, a job creator, a compassionate soul who is interested in expanding the workforce in a smart way. I want to thank the local government providing for the one-stops. Appreciate you running it, Rocky—or Rock. [Laughter]

And finally, I'm so honored to have been here at this community college. Madam President, thanks for opening it up. Thank you for doing what you're doing. Thank you for providing hope for people, providing an opportunity for people to take advantage of this exciting era in which we live.

Finally, I want to conclude by telling you that I talked about the challenges that faced our country. We'll have other challenges too. There's no doubt in my mind, this great country will overcome any challenge put in its path, because this country is great because of the people of this country.

Thanks for coming. God bless, and God bless our great land. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:40 a.m. at Marshall Community and Technical College. In his remarks, he referred to Dan Angel, president, Marshall University.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

March 27

In the morning, at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, the President had an intelligence briefing.

March 29

In the morning, the President returned to Washington, DC. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President met with Secretary of State Colin L. Powell.

March 30

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Appleton, WI, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Gloria Grandone.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

March 31

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President-elect Antonio Saca of El Salvador to congratulate him on his March 21 election victory. Later, he had an intelligence briefing and then met with Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld.

In the afternoon, in an Oval Office ceremony, the President received diplomatic credentials from Ambassadors James Spalding of Paraguay, Dodou Bammy Jagne of Gambia, Colin David Beck of the Solomon Islands, Carlos Alberto de Icaza Gonzalez of Mexico, Imad Moustapha of Syria, Eduardo Ferrero Costa of Peru, and Jose Guillermo Castillo Villacorta of Guatemala.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael W. Marine to be Ambassador to Vietnam.

The President announced his intention to nominate Otis Webb Brawley, Jr., and Vinicio E. Madrigal to be members of the Board of Regents of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences.

April 1

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. He then had separate telephone conversations with United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, Prime Minister Konstandinos Karamanlis of Greece, and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey to discuss the Secretary-General's proposed Cyprus settlement plan.

In the afternoon, the President had lunch with Vice President Dick Cheney. Later, in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building, he participated in a Greek Independence Day celebration.

April 2

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a telephone conversation with President Islom Karimov

of Uzbekistan to express his condolences on the recent terrorist attacks in Tashkent and to discuss counterterrorism efforts.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Huntington, WV, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Robin Black.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Greensboro, GA, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteers Don and Anita McCoy.

In the evening, the President traveled to Camp David, MD.

The President announced his designation of Thomas V. Skinner as Acting Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (Enforcement and Compliance Assurance).

The President announced his intention to designate David Garman as Acting Under Secretary of Energy.

The President declared an emergency in North Dakota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by record snow on January 23–27.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

Submitted March 30

Christopher R. Hill, of Rhode Island, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Korea.

Submitted April 1

Otis Webb Brawley, Jr., of Georgia, to be a member of the Board of Regents of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences for a term expiring June 20, 2009 (reappointment).

Vinicio E. Madrigal,
of Louisiana, to be a member of the Board
of Regents of the Uniformed Services Uni-
versity of the Health Sciences for a term ex-
piring June 20, 2009 (reappointment).

Michael W. Marine,
of Vermont, a career member of the Senior
Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor,
to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Pleni-
potentiary of the United States of America
to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office
of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as
items nor covered by entries in the Digest of
Other White House Announcements.

Released March 28

Transcript of an interview by National Security
Adviser Condoleezza Rice with Ed Bradley,
CBS, “60 Minutes”

Released March 29

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Sec-
retary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary: Terrorist
Bombings in Uzbekistan

Released March 30

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Sec-
retary Scott McClellan

Fact sheet: Strengthening America’s Econ-
omy and Creating Jobs in Wisconsin

Released March 31

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Sec-
retary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing
that the President signed S. 2231 and S. 2241

Released April 1

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Sec-
retary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary on Senate
ratification of the Additional Protocol be-
tween the United States and the Inter-
national Atomic Energy Agency

Statement by the Press Secretary: Cyprus
Settlement

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing
that the President signed H.R. 1997, H.R.
3724, and S. 1881

Released April 2

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Sec-
retary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary on congres-
sional passage of legislation to protect pen-
sions

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster
assistance to North Dakota

Fact sheet: 308,000 Americans Find Work
in March

Acts Approved by the President

Approved March 31

S. 2231 / Public Law 108–210
Welfare Reform Extension Act of 2004

S. 2241 / Public Law 108–211
To reauthorize certain school lunch and child
nutrition programs through June 30, 2004

Approved April 1

H.R. 1997 / Public Law 108–212
Unborn Victims of Violence Act of 2004

H.R. 3724 / Public Law 108–213
Energy Efficient Housing Technical Correc-
tion Act

S. 1881 / Public Law 108–214
Medical Devices Technical Corrections Act